

**2018 ADDENDUM
TO THE
2009 CITY OF BIG RAPIDS,
MICHIGAN
MASTER PLAN**

ADOPTED JANUARY 15, 2018

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS PLANNING COMMISSION

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2018 ADDENDUM TO THE 2009 CITY OF BIG RAPIDS, MICHIGAN MASTER PLAN

The following resolution was offered by Member _____, and supported by Member_____:

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission initiated a process to update the City of Big Rapids Master Plan by notifying Mecosta County and the adjacent Townships of Big Rapids and Green at the beginning of the planning process; and

WHEREAS, public participation was sought and obtained by the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission to assist in identifying the preferred vision of the City of Big Rapids through the use of a public hearing; and

WHEREAS, information in the form of text, tables, and maps was prepared for inclusion in the 2018 Addendum to the 2009 City of Big Rapids, Michigan Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids has provided an appropriate review period required by Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008 to its residents, Mecosta County, and the adjacent Townships of Big Rapids and Green and held a public hearing regarding the adoption of the Master Plan on January 17, 2018;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission hereby formally adopts the ***2018 Addendum to the 2009 City of Big Rapids, Michigan Master Plan***, its narrative, maps, tables, and other descriptive data as its guide for growth and improvement for the City of Big Rapids

AYES:_____

NAYS:_____

The Chairman and the Secretary of the Planning Commission hereby certify that the above Resolution, which applies to the following document, was duly adopted at a public meeting of the City of Big Rapids Plan Board conducted on January 17, 2018.

, Planning Commission Chair

, Planning Commission Secretary

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Big Rapids Planning Commission and the City's Neighborhood Services Department worked with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission to develop the 2018 Addendum to the 2009 City of Big Rapids, Michigan Master Plan. The Planning Commission reviewed the Master Plan and felt that the majority of its content was still effective, but wanted to address land use changes that occurred along the Muskegon River related to an older industrial area. Also, the 2010 Census was performed since the 2009 Plan's adoption, so newer demographic information is included for review (both 2010 Census data and information from the American Community Survey) – this information influenced the trend-based projections as well. Finally, the goals and actions were reviewed and changes addressed during this process.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Population Trends

Between 1980 and 2010 the City of Big Rapids' population decreased from a peak of 14,361 to 10,601 in 2010. This decrease of 3,760 people is a 26.2 percent decrease. One reason for the decrease relates to a detachment that occurred between the City of Big Rapids and Big Rapids Township. Part of the Township was annexed, which increased the population, but then reversed during a detachment. Additionally, the student population of Ferris State University fluctuates from year to year, which makes the numbers fluctuate, but does not influence the City as much as if the University was not present.

Big Rapids Township's population increased from 2,471 in 1980 to 4,208 in 2010. This represents an increase of 1,737 people and a percentage change of 70.3 percent. Green Township's population increased from 2,847 in 1980 to 3,292 in 2010, which is an increase of 15.6 percent. Mecosta County's population increased during the 30-year period by 15.8 percent to reach 42,798 in 2010. During the same 30-year period Michigan grew by 6.7 percent to reach 9,883,640 people.

Table 2: Population Trends

Location	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980-2010 Change	
					#	%
City of Big Rapids	14,361	12,603	10,849	10,601	(3,760)	-26.2
Big Rapids Township	2,471	3,100	3,249	4,208	1,737	70.3
Green Township	2,847	2,833	3,209	3,292	445	15.6
Mecosta County	36,961	37,308	40,553	42,798	5,837	15.8
Michigan	9,262,078	9,295,277	9,938,444	9,883,640	621,562	6.7

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Age and Gender Distribution

Table 3 shows that the age distribution in Big Rapids is different than the comparison areas in several ways. The City's median age of 21.8 is considerably lower than any of the comparison areas (Michigan's is 38.9). This is due to the high concentration of college-age students attending Ferris State University. People between the ages of 18 and 24 made up 54.0 percent of the population in 2010, compared to 10.0 percent of Michigan's population. Due to the extremely high proportion of college-age residents, all of the other age categories are lower than the comparison areas.

Typically communities have a higher proportion of females due to the fact that they live several years longer than males. This trend is reversed in the City of Big Rapids and the County not due to life expectancy, but due to Ferris State University's programs attracting more males than females.

Table 3: Age and Gender Distribution in 2010

	Big Rapids City		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Under 5	459	4.3	199	4.7	189	5.7	2,228	5.2	6.0
5-17	869	8.2	569	13.5	554	16.8	6,318	14.8	17.7
18-24	5,722	54.0	1,210	28.8	294	8.9	8,950	20.9	10.0
25-34	1,146	10.8	361	8.6	363	11.0	4,263	10.0	11.8
35-44	540	5.1	361	8.6	369	11.2	4,072	9.5	12.9
45-54	613	5.8	507	12.0	566	17.2	5,218	12.2	15.2
55-64	568	5.4	463	11.0	432	13.1	5,172	12.1	12.7
65-84	552	5.2	444	10.6	475	14.4	5,883	13.7	11.8
85 and over	132	1.2	94	2.2	50	1.5	694	1.6	1.9
Median Age	21.8	---	27.6	---	42.0	---	34.0	---	38.9
Male	5,409	51.0	2,082	49.5	1,625	49.4	21,487	50.2	49.1
Female	5,192	49.0	2,126	50.5	1,667	50.6	21,311	49.8	50.9
Total	10,601	100.0	4,208	100.0	3,292	100.0	42,798	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Household Distribution

Of the City of Big Rapids' 3,330 households, 1,323 were considered family households in 2010. This figure represents 39.7 percent of the City's households, which is much lower than Michigan's figure of 66.0 percent. The City has a much lower percentage of family households (due to off-campus housing) and the County has a slightly lower percentage (63.2 percent) than Michigan. Married couples account for a much lower percentage in the City than the comparison areas. Single-parent households in Big Rapids account for a similar percentage as Michigan, but higher than the County and townships. Table 4 shows that the City of Big Rapids has a much higher proportion of householders living alone. The City's figure of 2.2 persons per household is lower than any of the comparison areas. Group quarters are not counted as households, and there were 3,222 Big Rapids residents in group quarters in 2010.

Table 4: Household Distribution in 2010

	Total Households	Family Households				Non-Family Households			Persons Per Household	Persons in Group Quarters
		Total	Married Couple	Female Householder, no spouse	Male Householder, no spouse	Total	Householder living alone	Householder 65+ living alone		
City of Big Rapids	3,330	1,323	762	422	139	2,007	1,217	326	2.2	3,222
(%)	100.0	39.7	22.9	12.7	4.2	60.3	36.5	9.8	---	---
Big Rapids Township	1,577	909	712	138	59	668	316	103	2.6	80
(%)	100.0	57.6	45.1	8.8	3.7	42.4	20.0	6.5	---	---
Green Township	1,331	920	740	120	60	411	326	125	2.5	14
(%)	100.0	69.1	55.6	9.0	4.5	30.9	24.5	9.4	---	---
Mecosta County	16,101	10,182	7,905	1,548	729	5,919	4,158	1,616	2.4	3,375
(%)	100.0	63.2	49.1	9.6	4.5	36.8	25.8	10.0	---	---
Michigan (%)	100.0	66.0	48.0	13.2	4.8	34.0	27.9	10.2	2.5	---

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Employment

Between 2012 and 2017 the County experienced a fairly stable labor force, but maintained an unemployment rate that was slightly higher than Michigan's rate and considerably higher than the national unemployment rate (Table 5). The County's labor force fluctuated between a low of 18,873 in 2012 to a high of 19,452 in 2016. Mecosta County's unemployment rate ranged from a high of 10.2 percent in 2012 to a low of 5.1 percent in 2016.

Table 5: Employment Trends

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Mecosta County					
Labor Force	18,873	18,859	19,269	19,305	19,452
Employment	16,957	16,964	17,743	18,173	18,469
Unemployment	1,916	1,895	1,526	1,132	983
Unemployment Rate	10.2	10.0	7.9	5.9	5.1
Michigan					
Unemployment Rate	9.1	8.8	7.3	5.4	4.8
United States					
Unemployment Rate	8.1	7.4	6.2	5.3	4.9

Source: Michigan Department of Career Development, Labor Market Information

Employment Distribution

Table 6 shows that Ferris State University's location heavily influences the employment distribution in the City of Big Rapids and to a large extent the surrounding townships as well. According to the American Community Survey, 37.6 percent of the City's labor force was employed in the "Education, Health and Social Services" category – which is considerably higher than Michigan's figure of 23.9 percent. Both townships also had a higher percentage of people employed in education than the State of Michigan. The City also has a higher proportion (16.1 percent) of people employed in the "Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services" category – as did both townships. Retail Trade is also higher than the average (16.7 percent) in the City of Big Rapids. These large peaks tend to make it appear that the area lacks in other forms of employment – with a smaller percentage of typical employment categories such as manufacturing, wholesale, finance, and professional. Also, it should be noted that these numbers reflect where people living in each area are employed – not the location of the jobs.

Education

Table 7 shows the education attainment levels for Big Rapids and comparison areas for residents (over 25 years of age). The City and townships have a lower proportion of residents with no high school diploma than Mecosta County or Michigan. The City and Big Rapids Township have a higher percentage of residents with high school diplomas than the other comparison areas. The City has the highest percentage of residents with some college (due to the large number of students in pursuit of a college degree). The

City and townships have a higher percentage of residents with Associate's degrees. Big Rapids City and Township have a higher percentage of people with Bachelor's degrees and Graduate or Professional degrees. This information is from the 2000 Census and was not included in the 2010 Census or the American Community Survey.

Table 6: Employment Distribution – 2015 5-Year Average

	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Township		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Civilian Labor Force 16 and Over	4,362	100.0	2,179	100.0	1,481	100.0	17,639	100.0	100.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting, and mining	26	0.6	50	2.3	10	0.7	477	2.7	1.3
Construction	54	1.2	118	5.4	100	7.1	988	5.6	4.8
Manufacturing	445	10.2	300	13.8	225	15.9	2,878	16.3	17.8
Wholesale Trade	39	0.9	45	2.1	22	1.6	252	1.4	2.4
Retail Trade	728	16.7	241	11.1	130	9.2	2,139	12.1	11.4
Transportation & warehousing, and utilities	57	1.3	47	2.2	48	3.4	719	4.1	4.2
Information	88	2.0	32	1.5	8	0.6	253	1.4	1.6
Finance, insurance, real estate, & rental leasing	190	4.4	116	5.3	59	4.2	700	4.0	5.4
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	130	3.0	115	5.3	116	8.2	891	5.1	9.3
Education, health and social services	1,642	37.6	698	32.0	423	29.8	5,071	28.7	23.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation & food services	701	16.1	300	13.8	211	14.9	2,036	11.5	9.5
Other services (except public administration)	152	3.5	29	1.3	59	4.2	724	4.1	4.7
Public Administration	110	2.5	88	4.0	70	4.9	511	2.9	3.6

Source: American Community Survey

Table 7: Education Attainment – 2015 5-Year Average

	Total Population 25 and over	No High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Some College, No Degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
City of Big Rapids	4,057	471	886	980	412	717	591
(%)	100.0	11.6	21.8	24.2	10.2	17.7	14.6
Big Rapids Township	2,597	150	762	468	218	566	433
(%)	100.0	5.8	29.3	18.0	8.4	21.8	16.7
Green Township	2,078	163	716	518	218	314	149
(%)	100.0	7.8	34.5	24.9	10.5	15.1	7.2
Mecosta County	26,471	2,819	9,114	6,035	2,494	3,603	2,406
(%)	100.0	10.6	34.4	22.8	9.4	13.6	9.1
Michigan (%)	100.0	10.4	29.9	23.8	8.9	16.5	10.5

Source: American Community Survey

Income and Poverty

Table 8 shows that the Median Household income levels in Big Rapids (\$24,956) were considerably lower than the comparison areas. Similarly the per-capita incomes show the same relationships. The percentages of people below the poverty level in the City were also higher than any of the comparison areas. As with all of the other population characteristics, the City's student population (Ferris State University) influences these numbers.

Table 8: Income and Poverty 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Average

	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% of Population Below Poverty Level
City of Big Rapids	\$24,956	\$13,688	42.8
Big Rapids Township	\$44,033	\$22,761	29.9
Green Township	\$45,846	\$25,040	13.5
Mecosta County	\$41,889	\$20,350	23.1
Michigan	\$49,576	\$26,607	16.7

Source: American Community Survey

Housing Tenure

Big Rapids' housing tenure (Table 9) is very different than the comparison areas' housing tenures. Nearly 92 percent of the City's housing units were occupied in 2010, which is higher than any of the comparison areas except Big Rapids Township. Just over 34 percent of the City's housing units were owner-occupied in 2010, which is a much lower percentage than any of the comparison areas. Conversely, nearly 66 percent of the City's housing units were considered renter-occupied in 2010 – a much higher percentage than any of the

comparison areas. The percentage of vacant units in the City was 8.1 percent, which was higher than Big Rapids Township, but lower than the other comparison areas.

Table 9: Housing Tenure in 2010

	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Total Housing Units	3,623	100.0	1,678	100.0	1,549	100.0	21,131	100.0	100.0
Occupied	3,330	91.9	1,577	94.0	1,331	85.9	16,101	76.2	85.4
Owner Occupied	1,136	34.1	981	62.2	1,094	82.2	11,536	71.6	72.1
Renter Occupied	2,194	65.9	596	37.8	237	17.8	4,565	28.4	27.9
Vacant	293	8.1	101	6.0	218	14.1	5,030	23.8	14.6

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Housing Types

Table 10 shows that the City has a very diverse supply of housing, when compared with the townships, Mecosta County, and Michigan. In 2015, 40.4 percent of the City's housing units were single family homes – Michigan housing units were nearly 77 percent single family. Since the City had a very low percentage of single family homes, it follows that it had a very high percentage of other types of housing units. Duplexes accounted for 10.7 percent of the City's housing units (much higher than all of the comparison areas). Multiple-family housing accounted for 42.1 percent of Big Rapids' housing units (also much higher than any of the comparison areas). The City had a higher proportion of mobile homes (6.7 percent) than the State of Michigan (5.4 percent) – but much lower than the two townships and Mecosta County.

Table 10: Housing Type Distribution – 2011-2015 American Community 5-year Estimates

Type of Unit	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
1 unit	1,404	40.4	1,346	69.2	1,161	79.7	15,535	73.7	76.8
2 unit	373	10.7	0	0.0	50	3.4	456	2.2	2.5
3 or 4 units	572	16.4	52	2.7	0	0.0	672	3.2	2.6
5 to 9 units	362	10.4	148	7.6	0	0.0	521	2.5	4.2
10 to 19 units	296	8.5	155	8.0	0	0.0	497	2.4	3.6
20 or more units	237	6.8	28	1.4	0	0.0	338	1.6	5.0
Mobile Home, Trailer or Other	234	6.7	218	11.2	245	16.8	3,073	14.6	5.4
Total Units	3,478	100.0	1,947	100.0	1,456	100.0	21,092	100.0	100.0

Source: American Community Survey

Age of Housing

Table 11 shows that Big Rapids' housing stock, with a median year built of 1972, is older than housing in the surrounding two townships and Mecosta County, but a little newer than housing in Michigan. Over a quarter of the City's housing was built before 1939, which is much different than any of the comparison areas. There was less building activity in the City of Big Rapids between 1940 and 1959, and while it picked up between 1960 and 1979 it was still less than the comparison areas. Between 1980 and 1999 there was an increase in

the City. Since 2000 the City outpaced the State of Michigan and Green Township, but Big Rapids Township and the County had more housing construction than the City.

Table 11: Age of Housing – 2011-2015 American Community 5-year Estimates

Year Built	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
1939 or earlier	914	26.3	159	8.2	54	3.7	2,837	13.5	15.2
1940-1959	314	9.1	244	12.6	182	12.5	2,120	10.1	23.3
1960-1979	866	24.9	551	28.3	535	36.7	6,047	28.7	27.6
1980-1999	901	25.9	522	26.8	447	30.7	6,402	30.3	22.9
2000-2009	275	7.9	311	16.0	232	15.9	3,122	14.8	10.3
2010 or later	208	6.0	160	8.2	6	0.4	564	2.6	1.7
Total	3,478	100.0	1,947	100.0	1,456	100.0	21,092		100.0
Median Year Built	1972	---	1981	---	1978	---	1978	---	1968

Source: American Community Survey

Value of Housing

The value of owner-occupied housing in Big Rapids is considerably lower than that of the comparison areas. The City's 2015 median value of \$88,900 was much lower than Big Rapids Township's median of \$158,900 and Michigan's median of \$122,400. The medians for Green Township and Mecosta County are both also higher than the City's median. The City's largest segments for housing values are the \$50,000 - \$99,999 (38.7 percent), the \$100,000 - \$149,999 (26.3 percent), and the less than \$50,000 (21.4 percent) categories.

Table 12: Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Housing – 2011-2015 American Community 5-year Estimates

Housing Value	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Less than \$50,000	254	21.4	36	2.9	101	11.2	1,738	15.1	15.7
\$50,000 - \$99,999	459	38.7	298	24.0	308	34.1	3,421	29.7	24.3
\$100,000 - \$149,999	312	26.3	224	18.0	199	22.1	2,328	20.2	19.7
\$150,000 - \$199,999	120	10.1	327	26.3	189	21.0	1,947	16.9	15.9
\$200,000 - \$299,999	9	0.8	218	17.6	80	8.9	1,337	11.6	14.1
\$300,00 and over	31	2.6	138	11.1	25	2.8	761	6.6	10.3
Total	1,185	100.0	1,241	100.0	902	100.0	11,532	100.0	100.0
Median Value	\$88,900		\$158,900		\$107,600		\$110,500		\$122,400

Source: American Community Survey

Analysis & Demographic Summary

The 2009 City of Big Rapids Master Plan used primarily 2000 U.S. Census information to describe the City's demographics. The information was collected in April of 2000 and released to communities over time. This Interim Report to the 2009 Plan uses some 2010 U.S. Census information and information from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is updated more frequently than the U.S. Census, but is based on estimates (as opposed to actual counts). The ACS is in its first decade as a resource for demographic information.

The population in the City of Big Rapids did not change a great deal, but did decrease by 248 people. The projections performed for the 2009 Plan projected an increase of 337 between 2000 and 2010. This is a difference of 585 people, or 5.5 percent of the 2010 population.

The age and gender distribution in 2010 is very similar to the 2000 figures. The median age of 21.8 remained the same over the decade in the City, the median age in Big Rapids Township dropped significantly, while in the other comparison areas the median age increased. The percentage of males in the City decreased from 2000, but still remained higher than the percentage of females (which is unusual, but influenced by Ferris State University's programs).

The number of households decreased by 58 between 2000 and 2010 in Big Rapids, while increasing in all of the comparison areas. The number of persons per household went from 2.3 to 2.2 during the period in Big Rapids. Both townships' figures remained the same, and the figures decreased in both Mecosta County and Michigan. The percentage of family households decreased from 43.5 percent in 2000 to 39.7 percent in 2010. This figure is significantly different than the comparison areas, all of which have a much higher percentage of family households. Conversely, the percentage of non-family households increased in the City.

Employment in Mecosta County varied between 2004 and 2016. The labor force remained fairly constant, but the number of unemployed decreased, lowering the unemployment rate to 5.1 percent in 2016. The unemployment distribution changed, but with the top three employment categories remaining the same: Education, health and social services remained the largest category (but did decrease from 40.6 percent of the labor force to 37.6 percent). Retail trade overtook arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services as the second largest category – but they have similar percentages of the labor force. The strength of these three categories slightly distorts the distribution of the other categories, but they are all essential to the community. It should be noted that this category is taken from the ACS and are estimates.

The distribution of educational attainment did not change a great deal between 2000 and 2015 (ACS). The City's distribution differs from the comparison areas in a number of ways including a higher percentage with no high school degrees and a lower percentage with high school degrees, a similar proportion of people with some college and associates degrees (except for Big Rapids Township, which is lower), a higher proportion of people with bachelor's degrees (except for Big Rapids Township, which is higher), and a higher percentage of graduate degrees (except for Big Rapids Township, which has a higher percentage).

Between 2000 and 2015 the City's median household income and per capita income both remained lower than any of the comparison areas due in large part to the student population. The most noticeable change is the dramatic increase in the percentage of the population below the poverty level in Big Rapids. The figure went from 23.8 percent in

2000 to 42.8 percent in 2015. This measurement increased in all of the other comparison areas as well, but none went above 30 percent.

The number of total housing units decreased between 2000 and 2010 according to the U.S. Census from 3,654 to 3,623 and the number of occupied housing units decreased from 3,388 to 3,330. The proportion of owner-occupied housing units decreased. The City's housing remains unique due to the number of rental units (influenced by Ferris State University's student population).

Between 2000 and 2015 the number of single family housing units decreased from 1,563 to 1,404 while the percentages of duplexes and multi-family units increased. The number of mobile homes decreased slightly. The age of housing in Big Rapids remained older than each of the comparison areas except Michigan. The value of owner occupied housing remains considerably lower than that of any of the comparison areas.

EXISTING LAND USE

Influences

The City of Big Rapids' existing land use distribution is influenced by a range of features. These features have shaped the City in the past and will continue to influence the City into the future.

The Muskegon River, which runs through the City, was a key reason the City was originally formed. Being divided by a river provides both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities relate to people's desire to be close to water – recreation, residential, and commercial uses are all enhanced by proximity to water. Challenges relate to flooding and limited access points (bridges) that divide the City.

Transportation has played a key role in shaping the City. In the past, the railway passed through the City of Big Rapids, but the rail has left and what remains is now a recreation resource (Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park). M-20 passes through the City, bringing east-west traffic between US-131 and Mt. Pleasant. Northland Drive (Business US-131) passes through the City in a north-south direction and is a key feature of the City – with both strengths and weaknesses. Also, while west of the City Limits, US-131 influences the City's future. Another transportation feature that will influence how the City grows is the Roben Hood Airport, on the north side of the City (City-owned but in Big Rapids Township).

Ferris State University occupies a large part of the City and is vital to Big Rapids' future. While the City does not have much control over development on campus, the areas around the University are the responsibility of the City and influence the vitality and character of the City.

The City's Downtown is an important part of the community and is how many people define the community – a vital downtown is essential to the image of any city. While the Downtown's boundaries are pretty well defined, there are some transition areas that need to be improved. The Downtown does have room for limited growth in almost any direction, but there are hard boundaries that cannot be avoided – such as Northland Drive, the Muskegon River, and Ferris State University.

The fact that Big Rapids is the County Seat for Mecosta County influences development. Many government facilities are located within the City. County facilities are located south of Downtown, City facilities are located Downtown, County Road Commission Facilities are located on the east side of the River, State and Federal offices are located on the City's west side, and other public facilities are located across the City. While these facilities do not generate property taxes for the City, they do bring people into the City and provide jobs for the area's residents. Additionally, Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital (formerly owned by Mecosta County) is a major facility that impacts development in the City.

Methodology

The City of Big Rapids generated the Existing Land Use Map and the acreage figures from existing files that are maintained by the City. Categories appropriate for the Master Plan were developed and will be used in the Future Land Use Map to insure continuity and allow for changes to be tracked.

Existing Land Use Categories

Residential Categories

There are four designated categories of residential uses. The total amount of land used for residential purposes in 2009 was 784 acres, or 28.0 percent of the City's area.

Single Family Residential – This category includes unattached single-unit homes. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to traditional dwelling units such as garages and storage sheds. This category does not differentiate between ownership options (owner-occupied, renter-occupied, or condominium). Due to the developed nature of the City there is no differentiation between high density, medium density, and low density single family homes – since most single family homes in the City are developed on fairly compact lots.

In 2009 Single-Family Residential covered 618 acres, or 22.1 percent of the City. Map 8 shows that Single Family Residential uses occurred throughout the City.

Two-Four Unit Residential – This category includes attached housing with two, three, or four units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, storage sheds, and other related uses.

In 2009 Multiple Family (2-4 family units) land uses covered 39 acres, or 1.4 percent of the City's area. Map 8 shows 2-4 unit residential units located throughout most portions of the City.

Apartment Complex – This category includes attached housing with five or more units that are located in large grouped units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, maintenance facilities, storage sheds, administrative offices, club houses, recreation areas, and other related uses.

In 2009 Multiple Family land uses covered 79 acres, or 2.8 percent of the City's area. Map 8 shows multiple family complexes located on the east side of the Muskegon River and along Fuller Avenue on the City's south side.

Mobile Home Parks – This category includes areas where mobile homes or other types of homes manufactured off site are located. This category only occurs where larger clusters of such housing occur, such as mobile home parks.

Mobile Homes covered 48 acres in 2009, or 1.7 percent of Big Rapids' area. Map 8 shows that such housing is located in two areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Public and Quasi-Public Categories

Government – This category includes a wide variety of land uses including municipal offices, federal, state, and county office facilities, Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital (since it was County-owned in 2009), maintenance facilities, and other areas maintained by a government unit or department. The category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

Government uses covered 55 acres in 2009, or 2.0 percent of the City. Map 8 shows concentrations throughout the Downtown, on the east side of the Muskegon River, and on the City's west side. Roben Hood Airport, which is owned and operated by the City of Big Rapids, is located in Big Rapids Township. This 627- acre facility is regional in nature, but is not included in Table 13's acreage calculations.

Schools – The category includes public, private, and charter schools (K-12). The category includes all support buildings, school-related recreation areas, parking areas, and other related uses.

School uses covered 72 acres in 2009, or 2.6 percent of the City's land. Map 8 shows schools located throughout the City.

Churches – The category includes all types of religious facilities. The category includes all support buildings, parking areas, and other related uses.

Churches covered 60 acres in 2009, or 2.1 percent of the City's land. Map 8 shows Churches located throughout the portion of the City on the west side of the Muskegon River.

Ferris State University – The University occupies 482 acres on the City's south side. This represents 17.2 percent of the City's area. There are a wide range of uses within the University's campus including classrooms, offices, residence halls, maintenance facilities, and other support facilities.

City & State Park – This category refers to the City's outdoor recreation areas and the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park that passes through the City's east side. This category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

In 2009 parks covered 263 acres, or 9.4 percent of Big Rapids' area. Map 8 shows the City's parks are located along the Muskegon River and in several residential areas.

Business Categories

Industrial – This category includes sites where any type of manufacturing process occurs. Industries can include those that produce various emissions in the process (smoke, odor, noise, light, vibrations, etc.) or those that do not produce emissions detectable to surrounding areas – such as the assembly of parts shipped from other facilities.

Industrial uses covered 186 acres in 2009, or 6.6 percent of the City. Map 8 shows industrial sites exist primarily on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Commercial – This category includes retail and wholesale businesses, business and professional services, personal services, and other businesses that provide goods or services to the general public. The category includes any buildings associated with the land use, as well as surrounding land, outdoor structures, parking areas, access areas, and other related areas.

Commercial covered 238 acres in 2009, or 8.5 percent of the City's area. Map 8 shows that commercial is focused on Perry Street, State Street, the City's Downtown, and in areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Vacant

In 2009 there were 219 acres of vacant land in the City of Big Rapids, representing 7.8 percent of the City's area. The majority of the vacant land is located adjacent to residential areas, but there are also vacant parcels in commercial and industrial areas.

Table 13: Existing Land Use Distribution

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percentage
Residential		
Single Family Residential	619	22.1
Two-Four Unit Residential	39	1.4
Apartment Complex	79	2.8
Mobile Home Parks	48	1.7
Public and Quasi-Public Categories		
Government	55	2.0
Schools	71	2.5
Churches	60	2.1
Ferris State University	482	17.2
City & State Park	263	9.4
Business Categories		
Industrial	186	6.6
Commercial	238	8.5
Vacant	219	7.8
Other (Streets, Roads, Water)	441	15.8
Total	2,800	100.0

Source: City of Big Rapids

DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

Population Projections

When the Big Rapids Master Plan was developed in 2009 projections indicated that between 2000 and 2020 the City of Big Rapids' population would increase by 677 residents (6.2 percent increase). The Plan showed that by 2010 the population would reach 11,186, but the actual population actually decreased from 2000's population of 10,849 to 10,601. Based on this change, Table 14 identifies population projections that indicate a decrease to 9,309 by 2030. Of course, projections in Big Rapids (or anywhere) are difficult to predict since it depends on Ferris State University's enrollments as well as other factors that are outside of the City's control. Additionally, a lot of student housing has been developed in Big Rapids Township since 2000 – which influences both the population and housing projections. This figure is tied to the Community Goals, which should be referred to when looking at future projections.

While the City is projected to decrease by 12.2 percent between 2010 and 2030, Mecosta County is projected to increase by 21.0 percent. Both surrounding townships are expected to grow, with Big Rapids Township projected to increase by 43.2 percent and Green Township projected to grow by 15.4 percent.

These population projections are based on trends. Many things can influence the trends including planning, community goals, the economy, marketing, economic development, and others. These same projections are used in this plan to project the age/gender distribution and housing needs for the City.

Table 14: Population Projections

AREA	POPULATION					CHANGE 2010-2030	
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	#	%
City of Big Rapids	10,601	10,278	9,995	9,632	9,309	(1,292)	-12.2
Big Rapids Township	4,208	4,663	5,117	5,572	6,027	1,819	43.2
Green Township	3,292	3,419	3,546	3,673	3,800	508	15.4
Mecosta County	42,798	45,041	47,285	49,528	51,772	8,974	21.0
Michigan	9,883,640	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Age and Gender Distribution Projections

The age and gender projections (Table 15) are based on trends from between 2000 and 2010. Since Big Rapids' population is so dependent on Ferris State University and where students are motivated to live (the City of Big Rapids or surrounding townships), these projections should be used with an understanding that they probably do not accurately reflect the population, but that they represent likely figures if past actions are projected into the future (such as housing choices and student counts).

The projections indicate that the college-age population (18-24) will remain as the largest age group, but will make up a larger percentage of the City's population – increasing

from 54.0 percent of the population in 2010 to 56.5 percent in 2030. The second biggest group, those between 25 and 44 (also a greater age-range than 18-24) will decrease as a percentage of the City's population from 15.9 percent in 2010 to 14.7 percent in 2030 – since this is the child-bearing age, it follows that the number of children will decrease as a percentage of the City's population during the same period. Residents between 45 and 54 are also projected to decrease as a percentage of the City's population. Trends show an increasing proportion of residents over 55 in the City of Big Rapids. While there are more males in Big Rapids due to the programs at Ferris State University, the percentage of males could decrease since more females are attending college than in the past.

Table 15: Age and Gender Distribution Projections

	2010		2020		2030	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 5	459	4.3	380	3.8	335	3.6
5-17	869	8.2	740	7.4	652	7.0
18-24	5,722	54.0	5,567	55.7	5,260	56.5
25-44	1,686	15.9	1,509	15.1	1,368	14.7
45-54	613	5.8	540	5.4	484	5.2
55-64	568	5.4	670	6.7	680	7.3
65 and over	684	6.4	590	5.9	531	5.7
Median Age	21.8	---	21.8	---	21.8	---
Male	5,409	51.0	5,037	50.4	4,664	50.1
Female	5,192	49.0	4,958	49.6	4,645	49.9
Total	10,601	100.0	9,995	100.0	9,309	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Household Distribution Projections

The projected number of households is expected to decrease at a slower rate than the population due to projections indicating household sizes will continue to decrease (Table 16). By 2030, projections indicate there will be 2,961 households within Big Rapids. This represents a decrease of 11.8 percent, while the population is projected to decrease by 12.2 percent. Within the household types, the percentage of family households is projected to slightly decrease; and within the family households category, the percentage of married family households is also expected to decrease. Conversely, the percentage of non-family households is expected to slightly increase; and within the non-family households category, the percentage of one-person households is expected to decrease, and the percentage of one-person households (65 and over) is projected to remain fairly stable. Overall, the average household size is projected to decrease from 2.2 persons per household in 2010, to 2.0 in 2030.

Housing Projections

Housing units are expected to decrease as the City's population decreases. The decrease will be slowed by households decreasing in size. Vacancy rates are projected to increase

(Table 17). Projections indicate that between 2010 and 2030 the number of housing units will decrease to 3,219 with an occupancy rate of 91.3 percent.

Table 16: Household Distribution Projections

	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS				NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS			PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD	PERSONS IN GROUP QUARTERS
		Total	Married Couple Family	Female Householder with no Spouse	Male Householder with no Spouse	Total	Householder Living Alone	Householder 65 & Over Living Alone		
2010	3,330	1,323	762	422	139	2,007	1,217	326	2.2	3,222
%	100.0	39.7	22.9	12.7	4.2	60.3	36.5	9.8	---	---
2020	3,153	1,191	665	375	154	1,961	1,138	309	2.1	3,333
%	100.0	37.8	21.1	11.9	4.9	62.2	36.1	9.8	---	---
2030	2,961	1,092	598	338	157	1,868	1,063	290	2.0	3,388
%	100.0	36.9	20.2	11.4	5.3	63.1	35.9	9.8	---	---

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Table 17: Housing Projections

	2010		2020		2030	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Housing Units	3,623	100.0	3,420	100.0	3,219	100.0
Occupied	3,330	91.9	3,130	91.5	2,939	91.3
Vacant	293	8.1	290	8.5	280	8.7

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Housing Type Projections

Projections shown in Table 18 indicate a decreasing percentage of single family units, decreasing from 1,404 units in 2015 (40.4 percent) to 1,226 units in 2030 (38.1 percent). Trends indicate an increase in the “2 to 4 units” category, increasing to 1,011 units. The number of units in the “5 to 9” category is projected to decrease to 296 units by 2030 and the number of units in the “10 or more” category is projected to decline. The number of mobile homes is projected to slightly decrease.

Table 18: Housing Type Projections

Housing Type	2015		2020		2030	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1 unit	1,404	40.4	1,330	38.9	1,226	38.1
2 to 4 units	945	27.1	1,026	30.0	1,011	31.4
5 to 9 units	362	10.4	328	9.6	296	9.2
10 or more units	533	15.3	510	14.9	473	14.7
Mobile Home, Trailer or Other	234	6.7	226	6.6	212	6.6
Total Units	3,478	100.0	3,420	100.0	3,219	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population; American Community Survey; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

ISSUES, GOALS, AND ACTION PLAN

The following identifies the issues, goals, and actions that were established by the City of Big Rapids in 2009. Many of the actions identified under one goal appear under other goals since there are many related issues, goals, and actions linked to the City's preferred future. Additionally, each action was originally placed in one of three categories: Short-Term Actions (2010-2011), Medium-Term Actions/Ongoing Actions (2012-2015), and Long-Term/Ongoing Actions (2016-2020). For this Addendum, the actions are all combined into one category since the short term action time frame has passed and the medium term time frame is well underway. Additionally, the length of the goals and actions was too long and unwieldy. Finally, this Addendum identifies progress as either "completed", "ongoing", or "not started".

Population

Issue – A declining population creates challenges in a community related to decreased revenues, the ability to provide an efficient level of services and utilities, the inability to best utilize the built environment, the influence on the public school system and many other challenges related to excess capacity and reduced revenues.

Assets – There are an unlimited number of assets that Big Rapids can build on in order to address the issue of a declining or stagnant population. The City's overall quality of life, the location of Ferris State University, the existing infrastructure and services provided by the community, the area's recreation opportunities, the City's location and proximity to US-131, Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital, the area's diverse economy, Roben Hood Airport, Big Rapids' downtown, the area's natural features, and many other assets are in-place and should all be emphasized when working to attract people and businesses to the area.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards creating a steady increase in population by providing a range of opportunities within the City that are important to attracting a diverse population that includes family households, senior citizens, college students, and others.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since growth is essential if the City is going to be able to adequately address many of the other goals established in the plan. Housing cannot improve if there is no demand for more and improved housing, the economy cannot grow if there is not a ready supply of workers, improvements to the transportation network cannot be made if the demand is not present, the downtown cannot be improved if the population is not great enough to support improvements, and facilities and services cannot be maintained without maintaining the population to support funding the facilities and services. Of course a balanced rate of growth is necessary to ensure that Big Rapids does not lose its small town character. The particular goal of population growth did not emerge as a major need of the community during the public participation phase of the planning process, but growth (or at least maintaining the existing population) is necessary if the City wants to be able to sustain (or improve) its current quality of life that depends

on providing residents and businesses with an adequate level of affordable services and facilities.

Actions

The following actions, related to promoting population growth, are intentionally broad and are not listed as short, medium, or long-term actions since they are addressed in other Goals (listed below). Notations describe the location of additional details.

1. The City will work to expand housing opportunities for all types of households – including family households, senior housing, and student accommodations. See Goal and Actions related to Housing. Progress: Ongoing
2. The City will work to maintain and improve its residential areas by enforcing regulations and working with homeowners to identify and rectify issues. See Goal and Actions related to Housing. Progress: Ongoing
3. The City will promote its many strengths to attract residents and businesses to the City by placing advertisements in select publications. See Goal and Actions related to Economic Development. Progress: Not Started
4. The City will work with the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure a complete count of residents -- this occurred during the 2010 U.S. Census of Population. See Goal and Actions related to Public Facilities and Services. Progress: Completed
5. The City will strive to maintain a high level of public services valued by existing residents and businesses – and sought by potential residents and businesses. See Goal and Actions related to Public Facilities and Services. Progress: Ongoing
6. The City will work with the Public and Private Schools to promote the area's schools to potential families. See Goals and Actions related to Public Facilities and Services, and Economic Development. Progress: Ongoing
7. The City will work with the surrounding townships to promote area-wide growth and maintain the ability to discuss the transfer of land from one governmental unit to another if the outcome is positive and desired by all involved residents and units. See Goal and Actions related to Cooperation and Coordination. Progress: Ongoing

Housing

Issue – The quality, condition, and variety of housing is an issue related to many factors such as a high percentage of rental housing units, student-oriented housing, foreclosures, lack of housing for families and professionals, poverty, and the inability to afford maintenance and upgrades.

Assets – The City has a diverse mixture of housing located in traditional neighborhood settings that are convenient to shopping, schools, parks, and other community features. There are many organizations devoted to strengthening the City's neighborhoods and housing stock.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards creating a balanced range of housing opportunities that includes well-maintained single family homes, multiple family units, and other types of housing.

Housing is included as a goal of the Master Plan since it frequently ranked as one of the top issues in the public participation phase of the planning process. Key person interviews, both workshops, many of the focus groups, and the community survey all cite housing as a key issue that needs to be addressed.

Actions

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, City Staff, and the Housing Commission to expand housing opportunities for all types of households by defining areas appropriate for housing development in the Master Plan and making any necessary amendments to the Zoning Ordinance that encourage quality development or redevelopment of housing. This would include housing to accommodate the needs of families, senior citizens, students, professionals, and others to allow for a varied population in the City. The City will encourage a broad range of housing values to ensure success. Progress: Ongoing
2. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City staff to identify capital improvements (such as streets, water, and sewer) needed to expand housing opportunities in Big Rapids and to include such improvements in the City's Capital Improvements Program. City staff will seek appropriate grants, loans, and other funding sources to develop and maintain necessary improvements. Progress: Ongoing
3. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City staff to develop improvements (such as streets, water, and sewer) needed to expand housing opportunities in Big Rapids and to include such improvements in the City's Capital Improvements Program. City staff will seek appropriate grants, loans, and other funding sources to develop and maintain necessary improvements. Progress: Ongoing
4. City staff will ensure that inadequate maintenance of housing does not detract from neighborhoods by enforcing regulations and provide residents with an easy and effective method for reporting violations such as parking issues, noise, over-occupied housing units, and maintenance issues. Progress: Ongoing
5. The Planning Commission and City Staff will explore the possibility of creating a land bank (similar to the program initiated in Genesee County to address the housing issues in Flint) to ensure that vacant housing and the current foreclosure issues across the country do not negatively impact Big Rapids' neighborhoods. Progress: Not started
6. Through planning and zoning, the Planning Commission will promote small housing developments and encourage developers to include an acceptable level of amenities (such as basements and garages) while at the same time encouraging the development of smaller, more affordable and sustainable housing. Progress: Ongoing

7. The Planning Commission, City Commission, Housing Commission, and City Staff will determine the feasibility of implementing a variety of incentive programs, such as Neighborhood Enterprise Zones and a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, to encourage property owners to invest in the long-term success of the City's neighborhoods and residential areas. Progress: Ongoing
8. The Planning Commission, City Commission, Housing Commission, and City Staff will encourage sustainable homeownership by maintaining information describing public programs designed to assist potential and existing homeowners. Progress: Ongoing
9. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Actions and make necessary adjustments. Progress: Ongoing

Transportation

Issue – Vehicular traffic and the condition of streets and roads are issues that detract from the overall quality of life in Big Rapids.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids is at the intersection of US-131 (West Michigan's north-south interstate highway) and M-20 (an east-west state route). Additionally, the City and Mecosta County provide a complete network of streets and roads to serve the area's residents and businesses. While traffic is seen as an issue in Big Rapids, traffic is also a sign of life in the area related to the demand for the services provided by both the public and private sectors. Additionally, traffic is really a relative condition – what is seen as "traffic" in Big Rapids, where a cross-town commute takes less than ten minutes, is not the same as "traffic" in larger communities where that is the amount of time drivers can spend getting through a couple of traffic signals.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards improving the City's streets through the use of asset management (maintains an up-to-date inventory of the condition of state, county, and city maintained roads and streets, and lays out a maintenance program that provides for the right fix at the right time) and will strive to reduce the impacts of traffic through the use of access management (improving traffic flow by proper placement of access points) and improvements to the transportation network.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since it was identified during the public participation phase of the planning process as essential. Traffic flow and the condition of roads were mentioned by key person interviewees and participants at both workshops. Most people seem to concentrate on Perry, State and M-20 as the key congestion areas that need improvements. Many of the focus groups also cited traffic and the condition of roads. The community survey listed traffic and the condition of roads as the community feature with which residents are least satisfied. While Roben Hood Airport is an important piece of the Region's transportation system, this goal focuses more on vehicular traffic. Roben Hood Airport is operated by the City of Big Rapids, but located in Big Rapids Township.

Actions

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City's Public Works Department to implement a transportation asset management program that maintains an up-to-date inventory of the condition of state, county, and city maintained roads and streets, and lays out a maintenance program that provides for the right fix at the right time. Progress: Ongoing
2. The Planning Commission will work with the City's Public Works Department, as well as the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Mecosta County Road Commission to coordinate transportation improvements with other improvements (public and private utilities, sidewalks, new developments, and other projects) to minimize repeating maintenance actions and closure of streets. Progress: Ongoing
3. The Planning Commission will work with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and Big Rapids Township to develop an Access Management Plan for the City's and Township's commercial corridors (especially State Street and Perry Avenue). The study will include working with the Michigan Department of Transportation to determine if the current lane configuration on State Street is optimal. Progress: Not Started
4. The Planning Commission will work with City Staff, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to promote bicycling on trails and on bicycle lanes. Progress: Ongoing
5. The City's Dial-a-Ride Transit System (DART) will strive to provide an adequate level of public transit to meet the needs of the City's residents and businesses. The Planning Commission will consider existing routes and service areas when making decisions related to locating facilities. Progress: Ongoing
6. The Planning Commission will work with City Staff, the City Commission, Big Rapids Township, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Transportation to determine the feasibility of an additional bridge across the Muskegon River on the City's south side. Progress: Not Started
7. The Planning Commission will work with City Staff to develop a Capital Improvements Schedule that will identify when to pave all remaining gravel roads within the City and provide sidewalks where beneficial. Progress: Ongoing
8. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Actions and make necessary adjustments. Progress: Ongoing

Downtown

Issue – Big Rapids’ downtown, and areas immediately adjacent to the downtown, endure aging public facilities and amenities, many out-of-date private facilities, vacancies, a poor mixture of uses, and other concerns that detract from the overall usefulness of the downtown.

Assets – Big Rapids downtown has many great assets such as adequate parking, wide sidewalks, a fairly good mixture of shops and businesses, and its proximity to public agencies, residential areas, and Ferris State University.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards improving the vitality of the downtown by maintaining and improving public facilities and encouraging merchants, property-owners, and residents to maintain and improve their facilities.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since the downtown is one of the most visible areas of the community and acts as the overall barometer for the health of the entire area. During the public participation phase of the planning process the downtown was frequently cited as a strength and as a weakness. Often the downtown was not specifically cited, but discussions centered on businesses or services that would typically locate in a downtown but that are lacking – such as entertainment and restaurants.

Actions

1. The Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will continue to work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to maintain and improve the City’s Downtown area by participating in existing and future programs designed to improve the Downtown’s physical and economic well-being. Progress: Ongoing
2. The Planning Commission will work with property owners and City Staff to consider redeveloping areas adjacent to the downtown to encourage an improved transition between the downtown and surrounding land uses. The Planning Commission will appoint a working committee to address this issue and develop more detailed action plans for the Planning Commission to consider. Progress: Ongoing
3. The Planning Commission, the Downtown Development Authority, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to maintain an up-to-date list of issues and to identify the best way to address issues related to infrastructure, streetscape, and vacancies. Progress: Ongoing
4. The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to promote downtown activities such as the farmers market to attract shoppers. Progress: Ongoing

5. The Planning Commission, the City Commission, and City Staff will work to maintain public facilities (City, County, State, and Federal) in the downtown area to ensure that users of these services frequently visit the business area. Progress: Ongoing
6. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Actions and make necessary adjustments. Progress: Ongoing

Cooperation and Coordination

Issue – Decreasing public resources are creating burdens on public bodies and limiting the ability for them to adequately provide services and facilities that residents, businesses, and others require.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids is the County Seat of Mecosta County, so many government services are centered in the City. The relationship between the County, City, and the surrounding townships is a relationship where the success of each is dependent on the success of each of the others so working to cooperate and coordinate efforts will lead to greater success and lower overall costs. There are already many examples of cooperation and coordination that occur between each of the units of government.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will strive to work closer with Ferris State University, Big Rapids Township, Green Township, Mecosta County, Big Rapids Public Schools, the State of Michigan, the Federal Government, and others to seek efficient and effective methods to provide public services and up-to-date facilities.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since the need for more cooperation and coordination arose in all of the types of public participation. The relationships between the City of Big Rapids, Big Rapids Township, and Green Township are important to the City's future. The City of Big Rapids is a mostly developed community, with very little vacant land to grow, while Big Rapids Township surrounds the City and has a lot of space for growth of residential and commercial developments, as does Green Township. While the Townships have room to grow, they do not have the necessary infrastructure to support an abundance of growth – but the City does have the necessary infrastructure, facilities, and programs that businesses and residents demand. Additionally, Michigan's economic challenges make it even more important for communities to coordinate efforts since there are fewer funds available than in the past. This issue/goal can also apply to public and private schools, Ferris State University, Mecosta County, and many other public and/or quasi-public organizations.

Actions

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, Department of Public Works, and City Staff to continue to provide water and sewer services to its residents and businesses, and will work with the surrounding townships of Big Rapids

and Green to provide an appropriate level of water and sewer capacity to encourage growth in the area. Progress: Ongoing

2. The Planning Commission will invite the planning bodies of the two townships and the Mecosta County Planning Commission to at least one meeting a year to share training related to community planning, discuss common planning and community development issues, and provide for opportunities to learn of current local activities. The Planning Commission will strive to share reports and plans. The Planning Commission will create an Education and Coordination Committee to develop a process for the Planning Commission to consider. Progress: Not Started
3. The City Commission and Public Safety Department will work with Big Rapids and Green Townships, as well as others, to provide efficient and effective fire and police protection to the area. Progress: Ongoing
4. The City will work with the surrounding townships, Big Rapids Public Schools, Mecosta County, and the State of Michigan to provide an appropriate level of recreational activities for the area's residents by considering the development of a joint recreation plan. Progress: Not Started
5. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Actions and make necessary adjustments. Progress: Ongoing

Public Facilities and Services

Issue – The continued success of the City of Big Rapids depends on maintaining an appropriate level of facilities and services necessary to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and public institutions.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids is a full service community that provides its residents with a high level of public services that include fire and police protection, maintenance of streets and sidewalks, public transit, parks and recreation, public water and sewer, and many other amenities and services that make living in the City enjoyable.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will strive to maintain an appropriate level of public facilities and services by improving facilities, planning for the future needs of the community, seeking funding from a variety of sources, and involving the community in the decision-making and budget process.

This is included as a goal since it was identified numerous times during the public participation phase of the planning process. Aging infrastructure, such as wastewater treatment and the condition of the City's streets, is a concern that was identified and must be addressed to ensure the future success of the City.

Actions

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to maintain an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program to ensure that maintaining and upgrading necessary infrastructure is carefully planned and long-term funding is in place for necessary improvements. Progress: Ongoing
2. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to survey its residents every three to five years to determine their satisfaction related to public facilities and services. Progress: Ongoing
3. The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will strive to seek outside (State, Federal, and Private) funding resources (grants and loans) to assist in funding public projects and programs. Progress: Ongoing
4. The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will ensure that all public facilities are planned, designed, and constructed to be sustainable. Progress: Ongoing
5. The City of Big Rapids will maintain an up-to-date recreation plan in order to assist in funding improvements to the City's parks using the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Progress: Ongoing
6. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Big Rapids Public Schools, charter/private schools, and the Mecosta-Osceola County Intermediate School District to identify future facilities' needs. Progress: Not Started
7. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Actions and make necessary adjustments. Progress: Ongoing

Economic Development

Issue – While the Big Rapids Area has a more diverse range of employment opportunities than other areas in Michigan, it still suffers from lack of adequate employment opportunities necessary for growth in Big Rapids.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids does have a more diverse range of employment opportunities than Michigan as-a-whole, with a lower percentage of jobs related to automobile manufacturing. The location of Ferris State University is a huge asset related to employment that provides a range of employment from professors and administrators to staff filling the many demands of keeping a university moving forward. The fact that the City is the County Seat also provides government jobs, and Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital provides healthcare jobs. The City also has a healthy mix of manufacturing employment and additional space for new businesses to locate.

Goal – Promote an appropriate amount of land and resources to manufacturing, commercial, and other land use categories that provide opportunities for businesses to expand or locate in Big Rapids.

This goal is included since all of the different levels of public participation identified the lack of jobs, and low wages, as weaknesses or threats. Most of the other issues addressed in this plan require resources to accomplish, and the best way to garner resources is to encourage the development and retention of high wage jobs for the area's residents.

Actions

1. The Planning Commission, City Commission, the Public Works Department, and other City Staff will ensure the City has adequate infrastructure in-place to meet the needs of existing and new businesses by maintaining an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program that includes a schedule of necessary projects related to transportation, water, wastewater, and other public infrastructure needs. Progress: Ongoing
2. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Ferris State University and Mecosta County Development Corporation to promote jobs in Big Rapids related to programs offered at the University by determining the feasibility of creating a business incubator centered on skills provided at Ferris State University. Progress: Not Started
3. The Planning Commission, City Staff, and Mecosta County Development Corporation will ensure the City's industrial park and industrial areas address the needs of existing and potential businesses. The City will also work with Big Rapids Township to promote business in the Airport Industrial Park. Progress: Ongoing
4. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation to help existing businesses expand and to help attract new businesses to the City. Progress: Ongoing
5. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to promote the area to existing employers and potential employers. Progress: Ongoing
6. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and others such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce, and Michigan State University Extension to diversify the area's economy by promoting the area for value-added agriculture, renewable energy, health sciences, tourism, education, and other employment opportunities. Progress: Ongoing

7. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee to attract funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and other federal and state agencies. Progress: Ongoing
8. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work closely with the Downtown Business Association (DBA), the Chamber of Commerce, and business groups to promote commercial and service growth in Big Rapids. The City will continue to support the DBA by maintaining a position on the DBA Board. Progress: Ongoing
9. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work closely with the Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote Big Rapids as a destination for visitors. The City will work with the CVB to determine the potential for creating a city position (Parks and Recreation Director) on the CVB Board. Progress: Ongoing
10. The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and the Downtown Development Authority will continue to improve the Downtown and promote it as a destination for visitors and a viable shopping option for residents by following the recommendations of the 2006 “Big Rapids Downtown Blueprint” and updating the document and process when actions are completed. Progress: Completed
11. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Actions and make necessary adjustments. Progress: Ongoing

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Influences

The development of the City of Big Rapids' Future Land Use Map was influenced by several factors. The following paragraphs describe several of these factors. They are not listed in any specific order of importance, but are listed to provide an understanding of the thoughts that go into developing a Future Land Use Plan.

The first consideration is the existing distribution of land uses in and around the City. It is obviously more difficult to recommend a change from one type of land use to another than it is to recommend developing a vacant area of land. Not only does changing the use of an area influence the area – but it influences adjacent areas that developed years, or decades, earlier. So, communities must carefully consider any recommendations to alter the existing character of an area through a land use change or by developing vacant land. Even if an area is in need of improvements, making changes to land uses can have unforeseen impacts on the entire community.

The second consideration is public input. By developing a preferred vision for a community, along with goals and actions to reach the goals, the community is expressing how the community will look in the future. If the community sees a growing population as essential, more space must be devoted to residential land uses, schools, and other amenities designed to serve a larger population. If a community wants to provide its residents with more jobs, land must be devoted to the development of private sector businesses (manufacturing, service, retail, office, and other private sector) or other employment-providing organizations (education or other public-sector jobs are examples). Examples of land use requirements to address community goals are as limitless as the number of communities and ideas. Also, it is important to recognize that one community goal often requires many land use recommendations. A goal of population growth, for example, requires not only additional room for homes to house the additional population, but changes that could attract people to the area (jobs, schools, public amenities, and other pieces that could attract people to a community).

A third consideration relates to adjacent communities. Care must be exercised to ensure that a proposed future land use does not adversely impact a neighboring community's character. Closely related to this is the fact that many communities (especially cities) are "built-out" or have very little room to grow. When this is the case, communities must work together not only to make the best use of the available areas for development, but to determine neighboring communities' interest in developing those areas.

There are many other facts that a community must consider when developing Future Land Use Plan, but these are the primary points that a community like Big Rapids must consider.

Methodology

The City of Big Rapids generated the Future Land Use Map and the acreage figures by modifying existing files that are maintained by the City. Categories appropriate for the Master Plan were developed for the Existing Land Use Inventory to insure continuity and allow for changes to be tracked. The Master Plan Working Committee reviewed changes suggested by City Staff for the Future Land Use Plan, and text was written to describe the changes. Table 19 identifies the 2009 land use distribution figures, the future land use distribution, and the acreage changes for each land use category. Additionally, there is a description of eight specific focus areas that may require changes to the Zoning Ordinance and additional input from the Planning Commission and property owners as the need for redevelopment of these areas increases.

Future Land Use Category Descriptions

Residential Categories

There are four designated categories of residential uses. The total amount of land proposed for residential purposes in the Master Plan is 948 acres, or 33.9 percent of the City's area. This represents an increase of 163 acres from the existing land use distribution for residential land uses.

Single Family Residential – This category includes unattached single-unit homes. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to traditional dwelling units such as garages and storage sheds. This category does not differentiate between ownership options (owner-occupied, renter-occupied, or condominium). Due to the developed nature of the City there is no differentiation between high density, medium density, and low density single family homes – since most single family homes in the City are developed on fairly compact lots. The City's Zoning Ordinance does differentiate between various types of single family residential uses.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the designation of many vacant areas in the northeast section of the City to single family residential. Additionally, several medium-sized vacant parcels on the City's west side are designated for single family residential, as well as the conversion of many single vacant parcels located throughout the City's residential areas to single family residential.

The total amount of land proposed for Single Family Residential purposes in the Master Plan is 768 acres, or 27.4 percent of the City's area. This change is an increase of 149 acres from the 2009 existing land use inventory (Table 19). Map 9 identifies the proposed distribution of single family residential.

Two-Four Unit Residential – This category includes attached housing with two, three, or four units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, storage sheds, and other related

uses. There are no designated changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan related to this category.

The total amount of land proposed for Multiple Family (2-4 family units) land uses in the Master Plan remains at 39 acres, or 1.4 percent of the City's area. Map 9 shows 2-4 unit residential units located throughout most portions of the City.

Apartment Complex – This category includes attached housing with five or more units that are located in large grouped units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, maintenance facilities, storage sheds, administrative offices, club houses, recreation areas, and other related uses.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the addition of land designated for apartments on the east side of the Muskegon River, along the River.

The total amount of land proposed for Apartment Complexes is 85 acres, or 3.0 percent of the City's area. This represents an additional six acres of multi-family housing. Map 9 shows multiple family complexes located primarily on the east side of the Muskegon River and along Fuller Avenue on the City's south side.

Mobile Home Parks – This category includes areas where mobile homes or other types of homes manufactured off site are located. This category only occurs where larger clusters of such housing occur, such as mobile home parks.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include a few additional acres that are currently vacant added to the areas designated for mobile homes.

The total amount of land proposed for Mobile Homes in the Master Plan is 50 acres, or 1.8 percent of Big Rapids' area, which is an increase of two acres. Map 9 shows that such housing is located in two areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Public and Quasi-Public Categories

There are five designated categories of Public and Quasi-Public land uses. The total amount of land proposed for public purposes in the Master Plan is 975 acres, or 34.2 percent of the City's area.

Government – This category includes a wide variety of land uses including municipal offices, federal, state, and county office facilities, maintenance facilities, and other areas maintained by a government unit or department. The category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include changing an area on the east side of the Muskegon River from government to apartments and adding government to the area north of the Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital. The hospital is included under Government since it was owned by Mecosta County at the time the 2009 Master Plan was developed.

The total amount of land proposed for Government uses in the Master Plan is 49 acres, or 1.8 percent of the City's acreage, which is a decrease of six acres. Map 9 shows concentrations throughout the Downtown, on the east side of the Muskegon River, and on the City's west side. These figures do not include Roben Hood Airport's 627 acres since it is located in Big Rapids Township.

Schools – The category includes public, private, and charter schools (K-12). The category includes all support buildings, school-related recreation areas, parking areas, and other related uses.

There are no changes identified between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan. The total amount of land proposed for Schools in the Master Plan is 72 acres, or 2.6 percent of the City's land. Map 9 shows schools located throughout the City.

Churches – The category includes all types of religious facilities. The category includes all support buildings, parking areas, and other related uses.

There are no changes identified between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan.

The total amount of land proposed for Churches in the Master Plan is 60 acres, or 2.1 percent of the City's land. Map 9 shows Churches located throughout the portion of the City on the west side of the Muskegon River.

Ferris State University – The Future Land Use Plan shows the University occupying 482 acres on the City's south side. This represents 17.2 percent of the City's area. There are a wide range of uses within the University's campus including classrooms, offices, residence halls, maintenance facilities, and other support facilities. There are no changes identified between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan.

City & State Park – This category refers to the City's outdoor recreation areas and the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park that passes through the City's east side. This category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include additional land designated for parks on the City's east side. The total amount of land proposed for Parks in the Master Plan is 295 acres, or 10.5 percent of Big Rapids' area. This is 32 additional acres of parks. Map 9 shows the City's parks are located along the Muskegon River and in several residential areas.

Business Categories

Industrial – This category includes sites where any type of manufacturing process occurs. Industries can include those that produce various emissions in the process (smoke, odor, noise, light, vibrations, etc.) or those that do not produce emissions detectable to surrounding areas – such as the assembly of parts shipped from other facilities.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the conversion of some vacant areas on the City’s east side to industrial uses.

The total amount of land proposed for Industrial uses in the Master Plan is 193 acres, or 6.9 percent of the City, which is an additional seven acres of industrial land. Map 9 shows industrial sites primarily on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Commercial – This category includes retail and wholesale businesses, business and professional services, personal services, and other businesses that provide goods or services to the general public. The category includes any buildings associated with the land use, as well as surrounding land, outdoor structures, parking areas, access areas, and other related areas.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the addition of several vacant areas on the City’s west side to commercial, as well as the conversion of several other areas of vacant land to commercial.

The total amount of land proposed for Commercial uses in the Master Plan is 258 acres, or 9.2 percent of the City’s area. This is an increase of 20 acres. Map 9 shows commercial use focused on Perry Street, State Street, the City’s Downtown, and in areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Mixed Use – The intent of this category is to encourage higher density development along the Muskegon River that will appeal to people seeking an attractive place to live; this includes commercial services that can enhance the quality of life of residents. Higher density housing such as 2-4 unit residential and apartment complexes could provide adequate density to help support limited commercial businesses, but businesses would also need to attract people from outside of the nine-acre area to succeed.

Focus Areas

The following eight focus areas require the input of the Planning Commission, property owners, residents, businesses and organizations, and neighboring land uses. This plan recommends that a committee is established for each focus area to address the need for any changes to zoning necessary and to determine the best approach for advancing each of the areas. The focus areas are identified on Map 9.

Focus Area One

This area, located in the northeast portion of the City, is currently vacant and zoned for residential uses. It is currently surrounded by a variety of other residential uses including a mobile home park to the west, single family residential to the south and north, and an apartment complex in the northwest corner. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for lower density residential uses.

Table 19: Future Land Use Distribution

Land Use Category	Existing		Future		Acreage Change from 2009
	Acreage	%	Acreage	%	
Residential					
Single Family Residential	619	22.1	768	27.4	+149
Two-Four Unit Residential	39	1.4	39	1.4	0
Apartment Complex	79	2.8	85	3.0	+6
Mobile Home Parks	48	1.7	50	1.8	+2
Total	785	28.0	948	33.9	+163
Public and Quasi-Public Categories					
Government	55	2.0	49	1.8	-6
Schools	71	2.5	71	2.5	0
Churches	60	2.1	60	2.1	0
Ferris State University	482	17.2	482	17.2	0
City & State Park	263	9.4	295	10.5	+32
Total	931	33.3	957	34.2	+26
Business Categories					
Industrial	186	6.6	193	6.9	+7
Commercial	238	8.5	258	9.2	+20
Total	424	15.1	454	16.2	+30
Mixed Use (Residential and Commercial)	0	0.0	9	0.3	+9
Vacant	219	7.8	0	0.0	-219
Other (Streets, Roads, Water)	441	15.8	441	15.8	0
Total	2,800	100.0	2,800	100.0	0

Source: City of Big Rapids; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Focus Area Two

This area, also located in the northeast portion of the City, is currently vacant and zoned for residential uses. It is currently surrounded by a variety of other residential uses including an apartment complex on the southern end, and single family housing to the north and south. The area to the west is currently vacant. The area to the east, located in Big Rapids Township, is also vacant, but planned for single family residential. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for lower density residential.

Focus Area Three

This area, located on the east side of the Muskegon River, is currently owned by the City and used for low impact uses such as composting. It is surrounded by the Muskegon River to the west and M-20/3rd Avenue to the east. Commercial and vacant areas are located across M-20/3rd Avenue. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for commercial uses such as restaurants and/or office space.

Focus Area Four

This area, located on the west side of the Muskegon River, is a mixed use area that includes single family residential, 2-4 unit residential, some commercial and government, and a park. The area is surrounded by the Muskegon River to the east, M-20/Maple Street to the south, the downtown to the west, and parkland to the north. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for preserving the historic flavor of the area.

Focus Area Five

This small area, located on the City's west side, is a mixed use area that includes single family residential and 2-4 unit residential. It is surrounded by other residential uses and commercial land uses. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for lower density residential.

Focus Area Six

This small area, also located on the City's west side, is a mixed use area that includes single family residential, apartments, and 2-4 unit residential. It is surrounded by other residential uses and commercial land uses. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for preserving the historic character of the area.

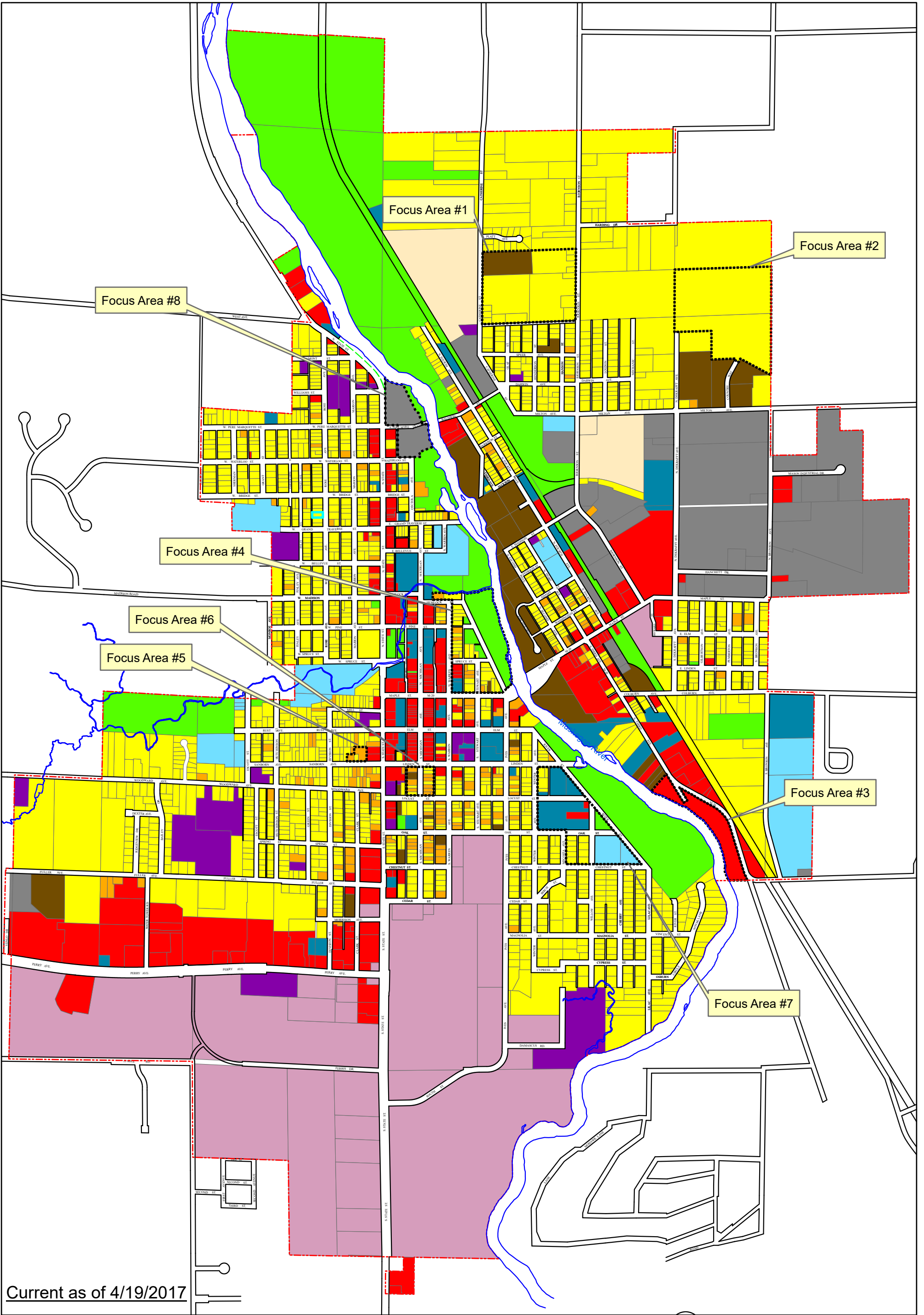
Focus Area Seven

This area, located in the heart of the City, is a mixed use area that includes Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital, Riverview Elementary School, some commercial uses, and single family housing. The area is surrounded by single family residential uses and parkland. This plan recommends developing an overlay zone that will allow the hospital to continue serving the residents of Big Rapids and Mecosta County in its current location.

Focus Area Eight

This focus area, located between State Street and the west side of the Muskegon River recognizes that the area is better suited to emphasizing the river and concentrating manufacturing in a more appropriate area. This change was initiated by the removal of an industrial building, followed by storm-damage to another adjacent manufacturer – as

reconstruction of the Baldwin Street Bridge and other street and utility improvements to the area occurred. The City would like to promote the area for mixed use development including a variety of residential and commercial uses. Since mixed-use is a new direction for the City, it is going to look at a variety of options before committing to a final decision.



Current as of 4/19/2017

Legend

COMMERCIAL	FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY	APARTMENT COMPLEX
INDUSTRIAL	PUBLIC/PRIVATE SCHOOLS	GOVERNMENT
RESIDENTIAL (SINGLE UNIT)	CHURCHES	MOBILE HOME PARK
RESIDENTIAL (2-4 UNITS)	PARK LAND	Future Rezoning

0 750 1,500 2,250 3,000 Feet

N
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S

City of Big Rapids
Master Plan
Map 9
Future Landuse

CONCLUSIONS

There are several conclusions the City of Big Rapids can draw from undertaking this update of its Master Planning Process in 2017 as well as the complete planning process in 2009. The first and most important conclusion is that Big Rapids is a great place with a wide variety of strengths. Closely related to this conclusion is that the residents of Big Rapids care very deeply for their community and want to see it thrive in the future. Residents know that the success of their community relies on a wide range of issues – some that the City is able to control, some that it can influence, and some that are clearly outside of the City’s capacity to influence or control.

The City and its residents can control the way development occurs through planning and zoning. The City can influence the appearance of the City by making investments and establishing and enforcing ordinances. The City can plan for the maintenance and improvement of its necessary infrastructure and initiate creative ways to fund these operations. The City can provide staff that addresses the many needs of a community – from administrative staff to public safety officials and road maintenance crews.

When it comes to issues that the City cannot control, but can influence, more cooperation and coordination is necessary. The City can work with businesses to help ensure their success. The City of Big Rapids can work with Ferris State University to ensure the mutual success of both institutions. The City can work with the Big Rapids Public Schools, Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital, Mecosta County government, and the surrounding townships to work towards common goals. Additionally, while the City can direct its citizens to maintain their homes and property and to be good citizens – it is ultimately an individual choice that the City can only encourage.

As for issues that influence the City but that the City has no control over – the City can strive to identify and develop ways to work around these issues. Michigan’s economy is one example of an outside influence that the City cannot control – but by diversifying the City’s employment base it can reduce the impacts of the State’s economy. The cost of fuel is another example – but by providing affordable transit and maintaining a compact and walkable community the City provides opportunities for residents to be less reliant on their automobiles. The funding challenges facing Michigan’s communities is another outside influence – but by carefully evaluating what is important and developing creative ways to fund the important actions the City can succeed. During the update process, it became very apparent that developing population projections for the City difficult due to the large influence of Ferris State University and the recent trend of private developers targeting the student population (oftentimes outside of the City’s limits). Growth trends in 2009 turned to decreases in 2017.

A community that takes the time to honestly evaluate itself and that develops a preferred vision will be better able to tackle the many challenges that all communities face. Part of this commitment includes constantly evaluating the planning process and never feeling that the community has reached its peak.

2009 CITY OF BIG RAPIDS, MICHIGAN MASTER PLAN

**PREPARED BY THE CITY OF BIG RAPIDS MASTER PLAN
WORKING COMMITTEE AND PLANNING COMMISSION**

**CITY OF BIG RAPIDS PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION**

**A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2009 CITY OF BIG RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
MASTER PLAN**

The following resolution was offered by Member Bill Simpson, and supported by Member Dan Spedowske:

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission and the City of Big Rapids Master Plan Working Committee initiated a process to update the City of Big Rapids Master Plan by notifying Mecosta County and the adjacent Townships of Big Rapids and Green on March 5, 2008; and

WHEREAS, public participation was sought and obtained by the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission and the City of Big Rapids Master Plan Working Committee to assist in identifying the preferred vision of the City of Big Rapids through the use of a random survey of residents, issue identification workshops, interviews of people identified by the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission, focus groups, and a public hearing; and

WHEREAS, information in the form of text, tables, and maps was prepared for inclusion in the 2009 City of Big Rapids, Michigan Master Plan; and

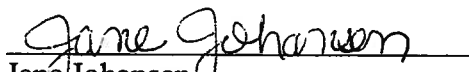
WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids has provided an appropriate review period required by Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008 to its residents, Mecosta County, and the adjacent Townships of Big Rapids and Green and held a public hearing regarding the adoption of the Master Plan on October 21, 2009;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission hereby formally adopts the **2009 City of Big Rapids, Michigan Master Plan**, its narrative, maps, tables, and other descriptive data as its guide for growth and improvement for the City of Big Rapids.

AYES: Sue Bean, Mary Jane Cook, Jane Johansen, Carol Larimer, Brian Pacholka, Bill Simpson, Dan Spedowske, and Tim Vogel

NAYS: _____

The Chairman and the Secretary of the Planning Commission hereby certify that the above Resolution, which applies to the following document, was duly adopted at a public meeting of the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission conducted on October 21, 2009.


Jane Johansen,
Planning Commission Chair

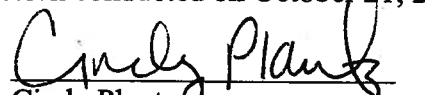

Cindy Plautz,
Planning Commission Secretary

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CITY OF BIG RAPIDS PLANNING COMMISSION

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- Jane Johansen – Chair (Term Began 9-16-2009)
- Sue Bean
- Mary Jane Cook
- Kathy Hooley
- Paul Jackson
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- Jane Johansen, Planning Commission
- Carol Larimer, Planning Commission
- Brian Pacholka, Planning Commission
- Lynne Scheible, Consultant
- William Simpson, Planning Commission
- Julius Suchy, Big Rapids Zoning Administrator
- Dave Bee, AICP, West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS CITY COMMISSION

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- Lynn Anderson
- Peggy Brennan (Term Ended 11-16-2009)
- Terry Harper
- Thomas Hogensen (Term Ended 11-16-2009)
- Lorraine James (Term Began 11-16-2009)
- Dan Rothstein (Term Began 11-16-2009)

INTRODUCTION

The development of the *2009 City of Big Rapids Master Plan* was a joint effort involving the citizens of the City of Big Rapids, the Big Rapids City Commission, the Big Rapids Planning Commission, a Master Plan Working Committee, staff from the City, the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, Ferris State University, and many other groups and individuals.

The last plan, *Big Rapid 2010: A Comprehensive Community Development Plan*, was adopted in 1996 and served the City well.

The *2009 City of Big Rapids Master Plan* is intended to be a living document to guide the City to the year 2020, with a comprehensive review scheduled for 2014. An annual review of goals and actions is built into the planning process, with a requirement that the Planning Commission review progress each January. Additionally, the City will incorporate information from the 2010 U.S. Census as it becomes available.

The City developed this plan allowing a variety of public input to insure that issues were identified by a range of people and institutions. People were interviewed, public workshops were presented, focus groups occurred, a community survey was performed, and public hearings were held after appropriate review periods were provided.

All of these efforts led to the identification of issues and the development of goals, actions, and the overall vision for the City of Big Rapids' preferred future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Master Plan was developed in 2008 and 2009 by a wide variety of individuals and organizations. The process was a joint effort that involved the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission (and a subcommittee established to be involved throughout the two-year process), the City Commission, City Staff, Ferris State University, Leadership Mecosta, and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission. The process allowed for a wide variety of public input – including workshops, focus groups, surveys, interviews, open meetings, and a public hearing.

The Master Plan includes a preferred vision for the City's future, issues, goals, and actions to guide the City towards the goals and the preferred vision. The Plan also includes maps developed by the City, a description of the area's population, projections, a land use inventory, and a future land use map. The goals, which are the most important outcome of the planning process, are listed below:

1. The City of Big Rapids will work towards creating a steady increase in population by providing a range of opportunities within the City that are important to attracting a diverse population that includes family households, senior citizens, college students, and others.
2. The City of Big Rapids will work towards creating a balanced range of housing opportunities that includes well-maintained single family homes, multiple family units, and other types of housing.
3. The City of Big Rapids will work towards improving the City's streets through the use of asset management and will strive to reduce the impacts of traffic through the use of access management and improvements to the transportation network.
4. The City of Big Rapids will work towards improving the vitality of the downtown by maintaining and improving public facilities and encouraging merchants, property-owners, and residents to maintain and improve their facilities.
5. The City of Big Rapids will strive to work closer with Big Rapids Township, Green Township, Mecosta County, the State of Michigan, the Federal Government, Ferris State University, and others to seek efficient and effective methods to provide public services.
6. The City of Big Rapids will strive to maintain an appropriate level of public facilities and services by continuously improving facilities, planning for the future needs of the community, seeking funding from a variety of sources, and involving the community in the decision-making and budget process.
7. Promote an appropriate amount of land and resources to manufacturing, commercial, and other land use categories that provide opportunities for businesses to expand or locate in Big Rapids.

PLANNING PROCESS

Introduction

The City of Big Rapids updated its land use plan in 2008 and 2009. The 2009 City of Big Rapids Master Plan was adopted by the Big Rapids Planning Commission on October 21, 2009 and by the City Commission on November 16, 2009. The planning process updated the City's "Comprehensive Community Development Plan," which was adopted April 17, 1996.

The update process was a coordinated effort involving a number of people and organizations. The City of Big Rapids Planning Commission was the primary body involved in completing and approving the process and the final document. The City's Neighborhood Services Department performed a wide variety of tasks, the Information Technology and Land Management Department developed the necessary maps, and other City Departments provided information to provide a broad view of the City's facilities and services.

The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) assisted the City with updating the Plan and Lynne Scheible, the Director of Leadership Mecosta, assisted with facilitating meetings and public input. Ferris State University assisted with a community survey.

Initiating Planning Process

In this action, The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) reviewed the work program with the Big Rapids Planning Commission to ensure everyone agreed to the established planning process and the anticipated outcome of the process. During this action a list of 20-25 key people to interview was also developed. The WMRPC worked with the Planning Commission to set dates for meetings with the Board. The WMRPC lead a review of the City's current Plan to determine the Planning Commission's interest in using existing information, deleting sections, or adding new information to the Plan. Also, the WMRPC notified all of the necessary entities to let them know of the City's planning process.

Community Description

The WMRPC developed an updated Community Description that includes a description of the City's physical (natural and built) features, programs, and demographic information.

Public Participation

Public participation was solicited using a variety of techniques and was be a team-effort between the City, WMRPC, and Lynne Scheible.

The WMRPC conducted Key Person surveys at the beginning of the planning process to gain a better understanding of issues in Big Rapids. The WMRPC conducted these one-on-one surveys in the City's Offices with the assistance of Lynne Scheible. Each survey took between 20 and 30 minutes and consisted of four open-ended questions related to the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Planning Commission provided the list of Key People to interview. The City and WMRPC contacted the people to set interview times. The WMRPC prepared summaries of the interviews that show issues identified during the process. A list of people interviewed is included, but responses are not linked to individuals.

Through a separate contract with the City, Lynne Scheible facilitated a series of focus group sessions to solicit input from specific groups in the Big Rapids Area – such as business, Ferris State University, Property Owners, Townships, and residents from both sides of the City.

Additional opportunities for public input include input sessions that are part of regularly scheduled Planning Commission meetings and the required public hearing at the end of the planning process.

Community Goals and Objectives

The WMRPC reviewed the Goals and Implementation Strategies established in the previous Comprehensive Plan at a meeting with the Planning Commission to determine which goals were still relevant and to determine what changes are necessary. The WMRPC worked with the Big Rapids Master Plan Working Committee to strengthen the City's Goals, Objectives, and Strategies, and insured that they were used to develop the Future Land Use Map. The WMRPC also helped develop a Vision Statement to identify a brief picture of the "ideal" future for Big Rapids in the year 2025. The statement identifies target population, housing, employment, recreation, services and other details of the City's future. The section also identifies a complete list of issues developed by WMRPC with the assistance of Key Person Interviews, Workshops, and the community survey.

The WMRPC also developed population and housing projections during this Action. The WMRPC based projections on past trends and the City's goals (since the goals will influence the future population and housing distribution). Projections include overall population projections, household distribution, overall housing numbers, and housing type distribution.

Future Land Use Plan

The Big Rapids Planning Commission and the WMRPC developed a future land use plan based on current conditions and trends, the issues and goals established in Action 4, and generally accepted planning principles. The Future Land Use Plan consist of a map and text describing the map and the rationale behind the decisions. The same level of detail and categories used in the existing land use inventory is used to develop this portion of the plan.

Planning Commission Review

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft of the plan to this point. Big Rapids Planning Commission and Working Committee revised the Draft at special work sessions. During this Action the Working Committee met to develop ideas and questions. This provided the Working Committee opportunities to critique the Plan in an open and familiar environment (other Committee Members). The Working Committee developed a list of changes and questions for WMRPC to answer at review sessions.

Finalize Plan

The WMRPC developed a Final Draft of the Plan based on the Planning Commission's comments in Action 6. The Final Draft of the Plan contained an up-to-date Future Land Use Map, a complete list of Goals, and a variety of text, tables and maps supporting the Plan. The WMRPC presented copies of the plan for community review. Some of these copies were forwarded to the surrounding townships and the Mecosta County Planning Commission for their review.

Community Adoption

Prior to adopting the Plan, the City forward copies of the Draft Plan to the two adjacent townships and the Mecosta County Planning Commission for their review and advisory comments. Prior to distributing the draft plans, the Planning Commission presented the Plan to the City Commission, who then approved distribution of the Plan.

After the Township and County comment period, two public hearings were held. Adoption by the Planning Commission on October 21, 2009 and the City Commission on November 16, 2009 were the final steps.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement is meant to provide an overriding view of Big Rapids' preferred future. Since this plan extends to 2020, the Vision Statement provides a look at the City, its residents, and other features in 2020. The Vision Statement follows.

Vision for 2020

The City's population has remained steady over the years. While average household sizes continue to decrease, the number of households has risen – resulting in a population made up of slightly fewer traditional family members (although a similar number of families) and more non-traditional household members (primarily seniors and students).

The well-maintained and diverse housing stock offers affordable housing to families and individuals of all ages. While there are owner-occupied single family housing units in the City, there are also well-maintained rental units (both single family and multiple family) available. The City encourages the maintenance of all homes.

Big Rapids continues to provide a range of employment opportunities. Efforts by Mecosta County and the City to diversify jobs are key to the area's success. The City of Big Rapids continues to work with the public education system, the private/parochial education system, and Ferris State University to ensure that people of all ages have a variety of educational opportunities to ensure success.

The City's Downtown is an attractive location to shop for a range of products and services. The Downtown links the City's residential areas, the retail/and service centers, public services, recreation, and Ferris State University. Ample parking is available and traffic congestion is limited. Pedestrians are key to the success and welcoming atmosphere of the Downtown. Additionally, there are also several supplemental commercial and service areas that meet the varied needs of the market area.

Big Rapids continues to provide quality public services and facilities. The City maintains a sustainable level of services and facilities. Parks and trails are one of the amenities that residents are proud of and a key reason the City maintains an up-to-date recreation plan.

Transportation, one of the key public services, consists of a well-maintained system of streets and roads. The City has embraced Michigan's Transportation Asset Management Program as a way to promote maintaining roads. The City also maintains a transit system, an airport, a system of trails, and a network of sidewalks for pedestrians.

Cooperation with other public bodies creates an optimistic spirit that recognizes that the success of each unit depends on the success of each of the others. Planning remains key to the City's success. The Planning Commission, the City Commission, City Staff, and Big Rapids' residents recognize that establishing a preferred vision for the future is essential to the area's success. The City also recognizes that an engaged community is essential to a successful community.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CITY OF BIG RAPIDS

The following is taken from the 1996 Comprehensive Community Development Plan. The original overview was written by Dr. Richard Santer.

Big Rapids' natural landscape can be traced to the melt-off of the Saginaw and Michigan glacial lobes about 13,000 years ago. Their retreat provided the City's undulating hill terrain, the upland terminal moraine vistas to the east and west, plus the intervening outwash plain of the Muskegon River.

The earliest humans likely came through the area about 11,000 BC based on relics found in the area. Between the mid-1600's to the mid 1800's European French-British-American fur traders (especially for beaver pelts) maintained economic contact with the Anishnabeg – the "original" or "first" people of the Three Fire Ojibway/Chippewa, Potawatomi and Ottawa tribal groups. Although most of the pre-permanent settlement features have been lost, it is likely that a few sites lie below the surface.

The early history of Big Rapids is associated with Michigan's logging industry. The Muskegon River was used to move logs downstream to the mills located in Muskegon. Currents near the City's present location were referred to by early lumbermen as "the big rapids." Permanent settlement began in 1855 with construction of homes and the establishment of families. During the first few years the community, including the surrounding township, was known as "Leonard."

In 1859 Mr. Warren and Mr. Ives recorded the first plat, named the Village of Big Rapids – even though there never was a legally incorporated village. The second plat created in the area was originally named the Village of Glen Elm plat and was recorded in 1860 by Margaret and Zerah French. Most of the present-day downtown lies between the two early "villages."

Scandinavian and German people arrived in the area after the Civil War creating the demand for new homes and stores. The expansion of the area prompted action towards the adoption of a City form of government. The State Legislature passed a resolution in April 1869 creating the City of Big Rapids.

Woodbridge Ferris arrived in Big Rapids and opened a school in September of 1884. The student body steadily grew and by 1906, enrollment reached 2,000. Enrollment declined during World War I, the Depression, and World War II. A fire destroyed Ferris Institute's main buildings in 1950, but the school managed to survive and is now a major state university offering a wide variety of courses. Mr. Ferris went on to become Governor of Michigan in 1912 and a U.S. Senator in 1922. Today Ferris State University is the area's leading employer.

During the early part of the twentieth century, construction of two dams provided electricity to the area. The two dams were built to harness the hydro-electric power of the Muskegon River, one located at Rogers Heights (1906) and the other in Big Rapids (1914). The availability of energy enabled the City to diversify its economic base to produce a variety of manufactured products. The dam in the City was eventually

removed, but the Rogers Heights dam continues to produce hydro-electric power for customers of Consumers Energy.

Mercy Hospital, opened in 1879 by the Sisters of Mercy, was the first hospital in Big Rapids, but due to several setbacks the hospital closed in 1919. The Community Hospital opened its doors in 1927. The hospital was part of the City administration until 1975 when it became Mecosta County General Hospital, and came under the jurisdiction of Mecosta County. Today Mecosta County Medical Center is a major community asset.

Oil and gas were discovered in 1933 in an area five miles southeast of the City. This discovery was of great importance to the Big Rapids community, creating new opportunities. The Austin Field has since been converted into an underground natural gas storage facility. Natural gas pipelines crisscross the State running to and from this underground storage facility.

The citizens of the Big Rapids have established a record as an early adopter of progressive ideas such as the City Commission/City Manager form of administration (1914), school district consolidation (1950 and 1965), income tax vs. property tax (1965), and the creation of many parks and a network of trails in more recent times.

NATURAL FEATURES

Natural features play a significant role in determining land uses and the desirability of an area for development. When effectively integrated into the planning process, natural features can help identify suitability for development, thereby providing a framework for decision-makers. The following section presents an overview of the land area and physical composition of Big Rapids.

Regional Setting

The City of Big Rapids is in the western portion of Mecosta County (Map 1). The City is primarily adjacent to Big Rapids Township, but is also bordered by Green Township (located north of the City). Big Rapids is the County Seat of Mecosta County and is the only City in the County. In addition to the City of Big Rapids, Mecosta County contains 16 townships, and four villages.

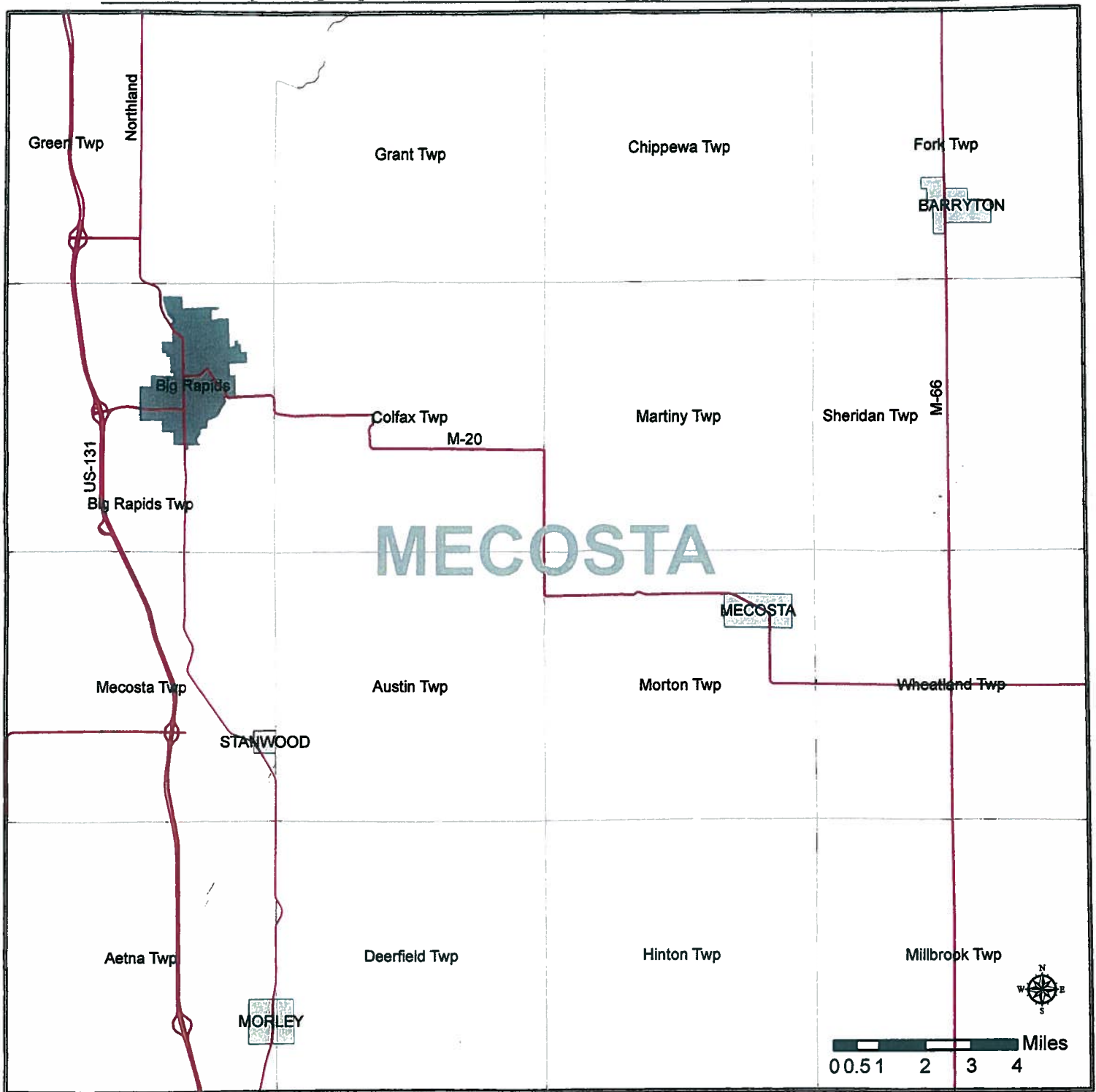
Mecosta County is located in the west-central portion of Michigan's lower peninsula. The County is bordered by Osceola County to the north, Isabella County to the east, Montcalm County to the south, and Newaygo County to the west. The County is a "traditional" Michigan County that is 24 miles square.

Big Rapids and Mecosta County are in the seven county area (Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Osceola, and Ottawa) served by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission. Big Rapids and Mecosta County play several important roles in the Region. These roles include serving as an education center with Ferris State University, serving as a regional health center with Mecosta County Medical Center, serving as a retail and service center with both the downtown and strip development, and serving as an employment center.

Big Rapids is conveniently located one hour north of Grand Rapids and one hour east of Lake Michigan, and less than an hour south of Cadillac and west of Mount Pleasant. US-131 (a four lane interstate) serves the City of Big Rapids for north-south traffic and M-20 (a two-lane state route) serves the area's east-west travel needs. The Muskegon River passes through the City on its way to Lake Michigan.

Climate

Big Rapids, like all of Michigan, experiences a range of temperatures and weather throughout an average year. January is typically the coldest month, with an average temperature of 19.2°F. July is typically the warmest month of the year, with an average temperature of 69.2°F. September is usually the wettest month of the year, with an average of 4.2 inches of precipitation. February, with 1.4 inches, is typically the month with the least precipitation. Annually, the area receives nearly 35 inches of precipitation. Snowfall generally occurs in seven months of a year, with the heaviest snowfall occurring in January – an average of 20.4 inches fall. Annually, there is an average of nearly 70 inches of snow.



City of Big Rapids Master Plan Map 1 Location Map

Legend

- State Roads
- Township
- Village
- City of Big Rapids
- Mecosta County

Table 1: Climate Information (City of Big Rapids Water Plant)

	Temperature (°F)			Precipitation (inches)	Snowfall (inches)
	Maximum	Minimum	Average		
January	28.0	10.5	19.2	2.1	20.4
February	31.4	11.4	21.4	1.4	13.4
March	41.4	20.7	31.1	2.4	9.5
April	53.3	32.3	43.7	3.1	2.3
May	68.6	42.7	55.7	3.1	0.0
June	77.3	51.5	64.4	3.4	0.0
July	81.9	56.6	69.2	2.5	0.0
August	79.2	54.5	66.8	4.0	0.0
September	70.3	46.7	58.5	4.2	0.0
October	57.9	36.3	47.2	3.1	0.4
November	44.1	28.0	36.1	3.2	6.6
December	32.9	17.9	25.4	2.5	16.9
Year (Average)	55.7	34.1	44.9	34.9	69.5

Source: Michigan Weather, 1993, American & World Geographic Publishing

Surface Water and Groundwater

The Muskegon River flows south through the City of Big Rapids on its way to Lake Michigan. Since the last Master Plan, the City of Big Rapids switched from using the Muskegon River for its public water source to groundwater wells. Additionally, the City removed a dam on the River.

Flood Plains

Although the Muskegon River flows through the City, steep banks along the River reduce the extent of the flood zone and protect the adjacent land from seasonal fluctuations in river capacity.

Topography and Soils

The topography of Mecosta County dates to the Pleistocene Epoch when the two lobes of the Wisconsin Glacier merged north of Big Rapids, the meltwaters of which became the Muskegon River. Glacial melt from the eastern Saginaw Lobe was combined with outwash from the Lake Michigan Lobe to the west to create a two to three-mile wide plain that is now the Muskegon River basin. Another outwash plain that varies from one to six miles in width borders the Little Muskegon and Chippewa tributaries.

For an extended period, these ice flows advanced and subsequently melted between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago, they left deposits on the underlying shale and limestone bedrock. This glacial influence is evident today in the undulating moraines that are prominent features of the landscape of the area. Glaciation that formed the physical environment of the region also altered the soil composition of the area and provided the deep-water aquifers throughout the Big Rapids area.

The following list contains the soil types and slopes. The classifications are suitable for very broad generalizations related to planning. Map 2 contains a map of soil types in Big

Rapids. Refer to the Soil Survey of Mecosta County Michigan for further information related to each of the soil types.

Map 2 Soil Legend:

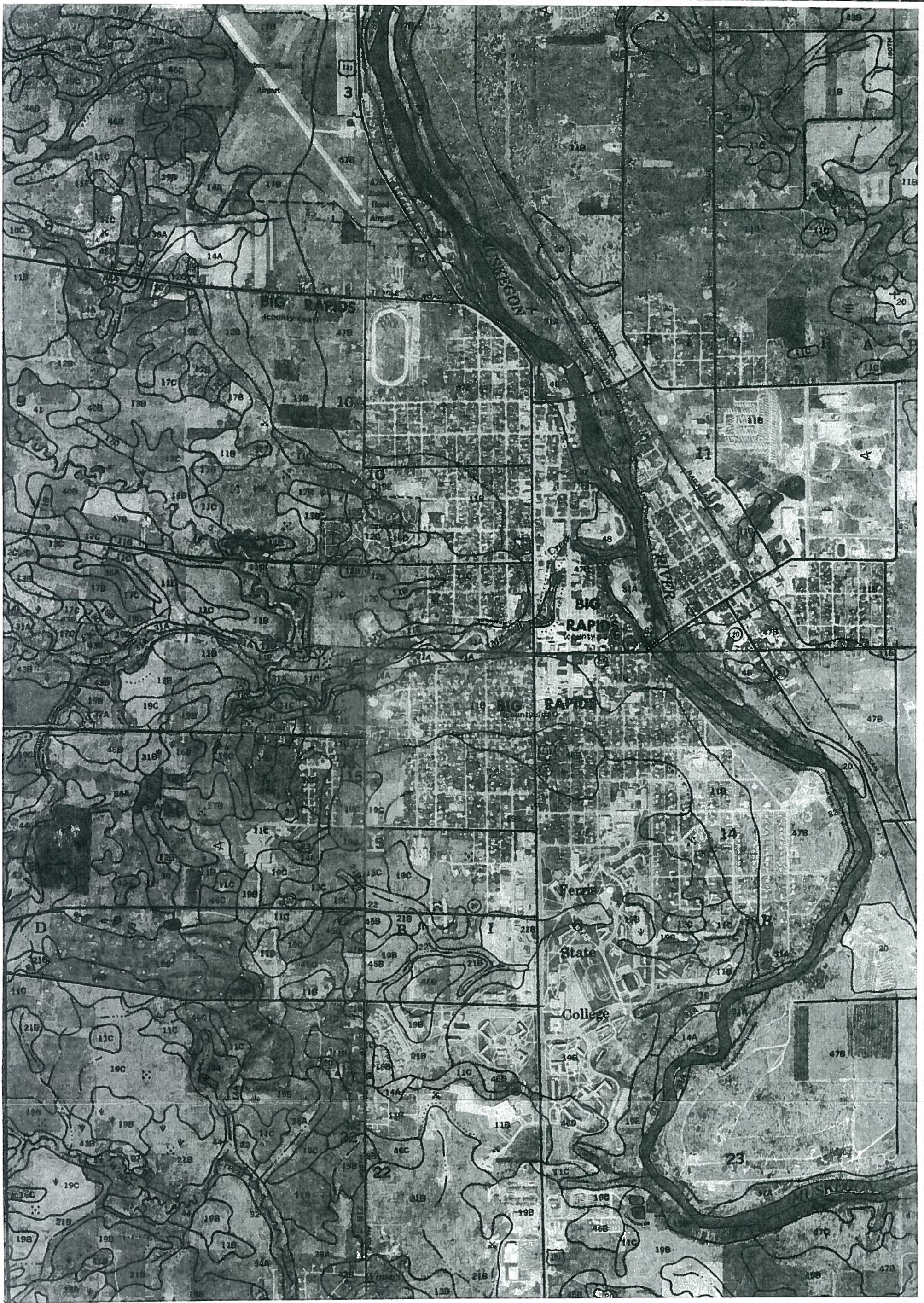
Symbol	Name	Symbol	Name
10B	Plainfield sand, 0 to 6 % slopes	27	Houghton much
10C	Plainfield sand, 6 to 18 % slopes	28	Houghton muck, ponded
10E	Plainfield sand, 18 to 35 % slopes	29	Loxley muck
11B	Coloma sand, 0 to 6 % slopes	30	Adrian muck
11C	Coloma sand, 6 to 18 % slopes	31A	Algansee loamy sand, 0 to 3 % slope
11E	Coloma sand, 18 to 35 % slopes	32	Glendora loamy sand
12B	Spinks loamy sand, 0 to 6 % slopes	33A	Wixom loamy sand,
12C	Spinks loamy sand, 6 to 12 % slopes	34A	Pipestone loamy sand,
12D	Spinks loamy sand, 12 to 18 % slopes	35B	Capac loam,
13B	Metea loamy sand, 0 to 6 % slopes	37A	Locke sandy loam,
13C	Metea loamy sand, 6 to 12 % slopes	38A	Thetford loamy sand,
13D	Metea loamy sand, 12 to 18 % slopes	39B	Riverdale loamy sand,
14A	Covert sand, 0 to 3 % slopes	40B	Aubbeenaubee fine sandy loam
16B	Remus sandy loam, 0 to 6 % slopes	41	Corunna fine sandy loam
16C	Remus sandy loam, 6 to 12 % slopes	42	Palms muck
16D	Remus sandy loam, 12 to 18 % slopes	43B	Arkona loamy sand,
16E	Remus sandy loam, 18 to 35 % slopes	44	Wauseon sandy loam
17B	Marlette sandy loam, 2 to 6 % slopes	45B	Coloma loamy sand, 0 to 6 % slopes
17C	Marlette sandy loam, 6 to 12 % slopes	46B	Tustin Loamy sand, 0 to 6 % slopes
17D	Marlette sandy loam, 12 to 18 % slopes	46C	Tustin loamy sand, 6 to 12 % slopes
19B	Perrinton loam, 2 to 6 % slopes	47B	Mecosta sand, 0 to 4 % slopes
19C	Perrinton loam, 6 to 12 % slopes	47C	Mecosta sand, 6 to 12 % slopes
19D	Perrinton loam, 12 to 18 % slopes	47D	Mecosta sand, 12 to 18 % slopes
19E	Perrinton loam, 18 to 35 % slopes	47E	Mecosta sand, 18 to 35 % slopes
20	Pits, sand and gravel	48	Psammaquents, nearly level
21B	Ithaca loam, 0 to 4 % slopes	49A	Covert loamy sand,
22	Ziengenfuss silty clay loam	50C	Metea-Coloma loamy sands,6-18%slopes
23	Roscommon loamy sand	51B	Leoni gravelly sandy loam,0-6% slopes
24	Vestaburg sandy loam	51C	Leoni gravelly sandy loam,6-12% slopes
25	Edmore sandy loam	51D	Leoni gravelly sandy loam,12-18% slopes
26	Edwards muck		

Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Survey of Mecosta County

Vegetation and Wildlife

Mecosta County provides a habitat to a variety of native vegetation and wildlife. The area's low-lying marshes are home to several species of waterfowl. Broadleaf deciduous trees and needleleaf evergreens dominate this local landscape. Forest cover of this type is a native habitat to whitetail deer, upland mammals, turkey, and game birds.

The abundance of natural wildlife in Mecosta County makes the area a popular recreational destination for hunting and fishing activities. Natural areas to observe vegetation and wildlife can be found at the nearby Pere Marquette State Forest and the Haymarsh State Game Area. In addition to existing aquatic species of smallmouth bass, northern pike and walleye, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources stocks the Muskegon River a variety of fish in an ongoing program maintain Michigan's fisheries.



LEGEND  NOT TO SCALE

NOTE:
FOR LEGEND SEE SOIL SURVEY OF MECOSTA COUNTY

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS MASTER PLAN MAP 2 SOILS

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Population Trends

Between 1970 and 2000 the City of Big Rapids' population decreased from 11,995 to 10,849 (9.6 percent), but not before increasing to a peak of 14,351 in 1980 and then dropping to 12,603 in 1990. One reason for the increases and decreases relates to annexations and detachments that occurred between the City of Big Rapids and Big Rapids Township. Part of the Township was annexed, but then reversed during a detachment. Additionally, the student population of Ferris State University fluctuates from year to year.

Big Rapids Township's population increased from 1,687 to 3,249 between 1970 and 2000. This represents an increase of 1,562 people and a percentage change of 92.6 percent. Green Township's population increased from 1,808 in 1970 to 3,209 in 2000, which is an increase of 77.5 percent. Mecosta County's population increased during the 30-year period by 44.9 percent to reach 40,553 in 2000. During the same 30-year period Michigan grew by 12 percent to reach 9.9 million people.

Table 2: Population Trends

Location	1970	1980	1990	2000	1970-2000 Change	
					#	%
City of Big Rapids	11,995	14,361	12,603	10,849	(1,146)	-9.6
Big Rapids Township	1,687	2,471	3,100	3,249	1,562	92.6
Green Township	1,808	2,847	2,833	3,209	1,401	77.5
Mecosta County	27,992	36,961	37,308	40,553	12,561	44.9
Michigan	8,871,722	9,262,078	9,295,277	9,938,444	1,066,722	12.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Age and Gender Distribution

Table 3 shows that the age distribution in Big Rapids is different than the comparison areas in several ways. The City's median age of 21.8 is considerably lower than any of the comparison areas (Michigan's is 35.5). This is due to the high concentration of college-age students attending Ferris State University. People between the ages of 18 and 24 made up 51.0 percent of the population in 2000, compared to 9.4 percent of Michigan's population. Due to the extremely high proportion of college-age residents, all of the other age categories are lower than the comparison areas, with the exception of residents 85 and over, which made up 1.3 percent of the population in 2000 which is the same ratio as Mecosta County, higher than Green Township, and lower than Michigan and Big Rapids Township.

Typically communities have a higher proportion of females due to the fact that they live several years longer than males. This trend is reversed in the City of Big Rapids, Big Rapids Township, and the County not due to life expectancy, but due to Ferris State University's programs attracting more males than females.

Table 3: Age and Gender Distribution in 2000

	Big Rapids City		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Mich- igan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Under 5	575	5.3	155	4.8	185	5.8	2,431	6.0	6.8
5-17	1,077	9.9	591	18.2	660	20.6	6,708	16.5	19.4
18-24	5,532	51.0	498	15.3	297	9.2	8,043	19.8	9.4
25-34	1,164	10.7	320	9.8	456	14.2	4,386	10.8	13.7
35-44	709	6.5	482	14.8	521	16.2	4,930	12.2	16.1
45-54	619	5.7	468	14.4	439	13.7	4,731	11.7	13.8
55-64	317	3.4	310	9.6	311	9.7	3,985	9.8	8.7
65-84	664	6.1	345	10.6	339	10.6	4,818	11.9	10.9
85 and over	138	1.3	80	2.5	0	0.0	521	1.3	1.4
Median Age	21.8	---	36.2	---	35.1	---	31.9	---	35.5
Male	5,668	52.2	1,661	51.1	1,505	46.9	20,513	50.6	49.0
Female	5,181	47.8	1,588	48.9	1,703	53.1	20,040	49.4	51.0
Total	10,849	100.0	3,249	100.0	3,208	100.0	40,553	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Household Distribution

Of the City of Big Rapids' 3,388 households, 1,447 are considered family households. This figure represents 43.5 percent of the City's households, which is much lower than Michigan's figure of 68.0 percent. The City has a much lower percentage of family households (due to off-campus housing) and the County has a slightly lower percentage (66.3 percent) than Michigan. Married couples account for a much lower percentage in the City than the comparison areas. Single-parent households in Big Rapids account for a similar percentage as Michigan, but higher than the County and townships. Table 4 shows that the City of Big Rapids has a much higher proportion of householders living alone, including older people living alone. The City's figure of 2.3 persons per household is lower than any of the comparison areas. Group quarters are not counted as households, and there were 3,197 Big Rapids residents in group quarters in 2000.

Table 4: Household Distribution in 2000

	Total House- holds	Family Households				Non-Family Households			Per- sons Per House- hold	Persons in Group Quarters
		Total	Marr- ied Couple	Female House- holder, no spouse	Male House- holder, no spouse	Total	House- holder living alone	House- holder 65+ living alone		
City of Big Rapids	3,388	1,474	899	485	90	1,914	1,210	333	2.3	3,197
(%)	100.0	43.5	26.5	14.3	2.7	56.5	35.7	9.8	---	---
Big Rapids Township	1,200	813	692	88	33	387	231	68	2.6	116
(%)	100.0	67.8	57.7	7.3	2.8	32.2	19.3	5.7	---	---
Green Township	1,259	857	730	115	12	402	312	85	2.5	5
(%)	100.0	68.1	58.0	9.1	1.0	31.9	24.8	6.8	---	---
Mecosta County	14,915	9,893	7,946	1,385	562	5,022	3,649	1,321	2.5	3,383
(%)	100.0	66.3	53.3	9.3	5.7	33.7	24.5	8.9	---	---
Michigan (%)	100.0	68.0	51.4	12.5	4.1	32.0	26.2	9.4	2.6	---

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Employment

Between 2004 and 2008 the County experienced a fairly stable labor force, but maintained an unemployment rate that was slightly higher than Michigan's rate and considerably higher than the national unemployment rate (Table 5). The County's labor force fluctuated between a low of 19,981 in 2004 to a high of 20,507 in 2006. Mecosta County's unemployment rate ranged from a low of 7.2 percent in 2004 to a high of 7.4 percent in 2006 and 2007 (the 2008 partial year rate was 8.4 percent).

Table 5: Employment Trends

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 (Jan-July)
Mecosta County					
Labor Force	19,981	20,292	20,507	20,270	20,146
Employment	18,544	18,817	18,993	18,768	18,448
Unemployment	1,437	1,475	1,514	1,502	1,698
Unemployment Rate	7.2	7.3	7.4	7.4	8.4
Michigan					
Unemployment Rate	7.1	6.9	6.9	7.2	8.0
USA					
Unemployment Rate	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.2	5.4

Source: Michigan Department of Career Development, Labor Market Information

Employment Distribution

Table 6 shows that Ferris State University's location heavily influences the employment distribution. Nearly 41 percent of the City's labor force is employed in the "Education, Health and Social Services" category – which is over double Michigan's figure of 19.9 percent. The City also has a higher proportion (16.3 percent) of people employed in the "Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services" category. Retail Trade is also higher than the average (15.5 percent). These large peaks tend to make it appear that the area lacks in other forms of employment – with a smaller percentage of typical employment categories such as manufacturing, wholesale, finance, and professional. Also, it should be noted that these numbers reflect where people living in each area are employed – not the location of the jobs.

Education

Table 7 shows the education attainment levels for Big Rapids and comparison areas for residents (over 25 years of age). The City and townships have a lower proportion of residents with no high school diploma than Mecosta County or Michigan. The City and Big Rapids Township have a higher percentage of residents with high school diplomas than the other comparison areas. The City has the highest percentage of residents with some college (due to the large number of students in pursuit of a college degree). The City and townships have a higher percentage of residents with Associate's degrees. Big Rapids City and Township have a higher percentage of people with Bachelor's degrees and Graduate or Professional degrees.

Table 6: Employment Distribution in 2000

	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Township		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Employed Persons 16 and Over	4,525	100.0	1,666	100.0	1,655	100.0	17,470	100.0	100.0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	9	0.2	11	0.7	0	0.0	435	2.5	1.1
Construction	144	3.2	107	6.4	45	2.7	1,124	6.4	6.0
Manufacturing	367	8.1	191	11.5	280	16.9	2,957	16.9	22.5
Wholesale Trade	44	1.0	21	1.3	18	1.1	365	2.1	3.3
Retail Trade	701	15.5	198	11.9	273	16.5	2,217	12.7	11.9
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	57	1.3	68	4.1	133	8.0	740	4.2	4.1
Information	88	1.9	53	3.2	31	1.9	333	1.9	2.1
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental leasing	82	1.8	48	2.9	51	3.1	548	3.1	5.3
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	219	4.8	45	2.7	64	3.9	679	3.9	8.0
Education, health and social services	1,839	40.6	644	38.7	532	32.1	5,165	29.6	19.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	736	16.3	114	6.8	120	7.3	1,660	9.5	7.6
Other services (except public administration)	152	3.4	86	5.2	58	3.5	749	4.3	4.6
Public Administration	87	1.9	80	4.8	50	3.0	498	2.9	3.6

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Table 7: Education Attainment in 2000

	Total Population 25 and over	No High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Some College, No Degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
City of Big Rapids	3,534	449	745	861	357	651	471
(%)	100.0	12.7	21.1	24.4	10.1	18.4	13.3
Big Rapids Township	2,109	217	478	447	214	422	331
(%)	100.0	10.3	22.7	21.2	10.1	20.0	15.7
Green Township	2,066	232	778	410	213	276	157
(%)	100.0	11.2	37.7	19.8	10.3	13.4	7.6
Mecosta County	23,314	3,773	8,521	4,828	1,790	2,716	1,736
(%)	100.0	16.2	36.5	20.7	7.5	11.6	7.4
Michigan (%)	100.0	16.6	31.3	23.3	7.0	13.7	8.1

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Income and Poverty

Table 8 shows that the Median Household income levels in Big Rapids (\$20,192) are considerably lower than the comparison areas – especially Big Rapids Township (\$47,933), which is considerably higher. Similarly the per-capita incomes show the same relationships. The percentages of people below the poverty level in the City are higher than any of the comparison areas.

Table 8: Income and Poverty in 2000

	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% of Population Below Poverty Level
City of Big Rapids	\$20,192	\$10,719	23.8
Big Rapids Township	\$47,933	\$22,761	10.7
Green Township	\$39,036	\$18,212	10.6
Mecosta County	\$33,849	\$16,372	14.7
Michigan	\$44,667	\$22,168	10.3

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Housing Tenure

Big Rapids' housing tenure (Table 9) is very different than the comparison areas' housing tenures. Nearly 93 percent of the City's housing units were occupied in 2000, which is higher than any of the comparison areas. Just over 36 percent of the City's housing units were owner-occupied in 2000, which is a much lower percentage than any of the comparison areas. Conversely, nearly 64 percent of the City's housing units were considered renter-occupied in 2000 – a much higher percentage than any of the comparison areas. The percentage of vacant units in the City was 7.3 percent, which was higher than Big Rapids Township, but lower than the other comparison areas.

Table 9: Housing Tenure in 2000

	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Total Housing Units	3,654	100.0	1,324	100.0	1,429	100.0	19,593	100.0	100.0
Occupied	3,388	92.7	1,200	90.6	1,235	86.4	14,915	76.1	89.4
Owner Occupied	1,223	36.1	918	69.3	1,011	70.7	10,985	56.1	66.0
Renter Occupied	2,165	63.9	262	21.3	224	15.7	3,930	20.1	23.4
Vacant	266	7.3	87	6.6	194	13.6	4,678	23.9	10.6

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Housing Types

Table 10 shows that the City has a very diverse supply of housing, when compared with the townships, Mecosta County, and Michigan. In 2000, less than 44 percent of the City's housing units were single family homes – Michigan housing units were nearly 75 percent single family. Since the City had a very low percentage of single family homes, it follows that it had a very high percentage of other type of home. Duplexes accounted for nearly 10 percent of the City's housing units (much higher than all of the comparison areas).

Multiple-family housing accounted for 40 percent of Big Rapids' housing units (also much higher than any of the comparison areas). The City had a similar proportion of mobile homes (6.8 percent) to the State of Michigan (6.7 percent) – but much lower than the two townships and Mecosta County.

Table 10: Housing Type Distribution in 2000

Type of Unit	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
1 unit	1,563	43.7	934	70.5	1,048	73.3	13,591	69.3	74.5
2 unit	339	9.5	17	1.3	28	2.0	430	2.2	3.5
3 or 4 units	428	12.0	20	1.5	6	0.4	501	2.6	2.8
5 to 9 units	427	11.9	24	1.8	0	0.0	462	2.4	4.0
10 to 19 units	384	10.7	46	3.5	0	0.0	474	2.4	3.4
20 or more units	192	5.4	32	2.4	0	0.0	245	1.3	5.1
Mobile Home, Trailer or Other	245	6.8	251	19.0	347	24.3	3,734	19.1	6.7
Total Units	3,578	100.0	1,324	100.0	1,429	100.0	19,593	100.0	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Age of Housing

Table 11 shows that Big Rapids' housing stock is older than housing in the surrounding two townships and Mecosta County, but about the same as housing in Michigan. Over a quarter of the City's housing was built before 1939.

Table 11: Age of Housing

Year Built	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
1939 or earlier	965	27.0	158	11.9	119	8.3	3,260	16.6	16.9
1940-1959	581	16.2	126	9.5	85	5.9	2,726	13.9	26.5
1960-1969	583	16.3	153	11.6	231	16.2	2,691	13.7	14.2
1970-1979	713	19.9	350	26.4	403	28.2	4,444	22.7	17.1
1980-1989	340	9.5	225	17.0	196	13.7	2,748	14.0	10.5
1990-March 2000	396	11.1	312	23.6	395	27.6	3,724	19.0	14.8
Total	3,578	100.0	1,324	100.0	1,429	100.0	19,593	100.0	100.0
Median Year Built	1964	---	1976	---	1977	---	1973	---	1965

Source: U.S. Census of Population

Value of Housing

The value of owner-occupied housing in Big Rapids is considerably lower than that of the comparison areas. The City's 2000 median value of \$75,400 was much lower than Big Rapids Township's median of \$112,300 and Michigan's median of \$115,600. The median for Green Township and Mecosta County is between the City's median and Michigan's. The City's largest segments for housing values are the \$50,000 - \$99,999 (67.9 percent), the \$100,000 - \$149,999 (13.7 percent), and the less than \$50,000 (13.6 percent) categories.

Table 12: Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Housing in 2000

Year Built	City of Big Rapids		Big Rapids Twp.		Green Township		Mecosta County		Michigan
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Less than \$50,000	129	13.6	14	2.3	57	9.8	912	12.9	9.9
\$50,000 - \$99,999	644	67.9	226	36.9	294	50.4	2,884	46.1	31.4
\$100,000 - \$149,999	130	13.7	215	35.1	171	29.3	1,436	22.9	26.6
\$150,000 - \$199,999	25	2.6	72	11.7	51	8.7	648	10.4	15.0
\$200,000 - \$299,999	20	2.1	66	10.8	10	1.7	393	6.3	11.1
\$300,00 and over	0	0.0	20	3.3	0	0.0	69	1.1	6.1
Total	948	100.0	613	100.0	583	100.0	6,258	100.0	100.0
Median Value	\$75,400		\$112,300		\$90,400		\$90,100		\$115,600

Source: U.S. Census of Population

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS COMMUNITY FACILITIES (PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC)

Big Rapids Schools

Big Rapids Public Schools – The Big Rapids Public School system is a class B district consisting of seven separate facilities located in the City of Big Rapids and neighboring townships. It is the second largest district, by enrollment, in Mecosta County. In 2009 the District had 2,022 students and a total staff of 275 (2009). Map 3 identifies the general location of the schools.

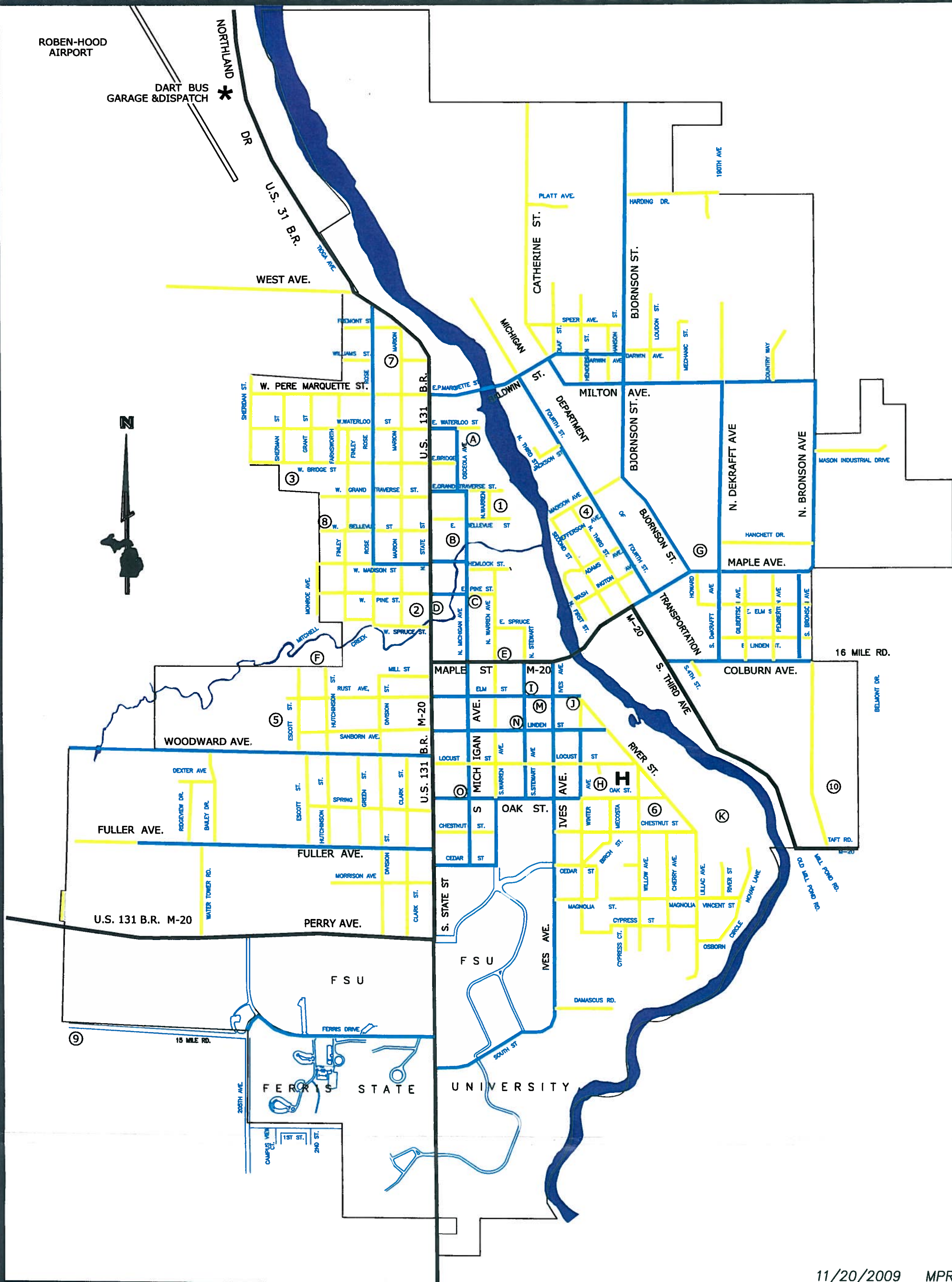
Big Rapids High School, located at 21175 15 Mile Road, has a student body of 650 students and employs 60 professionals and support staff. Big Rapids Middle School, located at 500 North Warren, has a student body of 441 and a staff of 53. Brookside Elementary, located at 210 Escott, has 250 students and a 29 person staff. Riverview Elementary, located at 509 Willow Avenue, has 220 students and a staff of 32. Hillcrest Elementary, located at 501 West Bridge Street has 240 students and a staff of 33 (2009).

In addition to the elementary schools, the Middle School, and the High School, there is the District Office, located at 21034 15 Mile Road; the Eastwood Early Childhood Center, located at 410 North Third Avenue; and New Directions High School, located west of the High School at 14980 215th Avenue. Student and staff counts for these facilities vary.

Parochial Schools – There are two parochial schools located within Big Rapids: St. Mary Catholic School, located at 927 Marion Avenue, and St. Peter's Lutheran School, located at 408 West Bellevue. Each school offers Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade. St. Mary Catholic School had a 2009 enrollment of 101 students and a staff of ten. St. Peter's Lutheran School has an enrollment of 111 students and a staff of ten.

Charter Schools – Crossroads Charter Academy, established in 1997, is also located within the Big Rapids School District. It consists of two schools. The Elementary School, consisting of kindergarten through eighth grade, is located at 215 North State in Big Rapids. The High School, grades nine through 12, is located at 215 West Spruce in Big Rapids. The Elementary School has an enrollment of 459 while the High School has 144 students attending (2004).

Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District – Big Rapids is also served by the Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District, which provides vocational and specialized education to residents of the two-county area. The Intermediate School District serves six school districts; Big Rapids Public Schools, Chippewa Hills School District, Crossroads Charter Academy, Evart Public Schools, Morley-Stanwood Community Schools, and the Reed City Area Public Schools. The District also offers a Career Center. The Career Center offers student occupational programs, which are open to the public, for services in cosmetology, automotive repair, and building trades. The Intermediate School district also offers an area Head Start Program and the Mecosta-Osceola Early On Program.



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SCHOOLS

- ① BIG RAPIDS MIDDLE SCHOOL
- ② CROSSROADS CHARTER ACADEMY
- ③ HILLCREST ELEMENTARY
- ④ EASTWOOD ELEMENTARY
- ⑤ BROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY
- ⑥ RIVERVIEW ELEMENTARY
- ⑦ ST. MARY'S ELEMENTARY
- ⑧ ST. PETER'S ELEMENTARY
- ⑨ BIG RAPIDS HIGH SCHOOL
- ⑩ M.O.I.S.D.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- (A) WATER TREATMENT PLANT
- (B) FIRE DIVISION
- (C) POLICE DIVISION
- (D) CITY HALL
- (E) CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
- (F) U.S. POST OFFICE
- (G) CHARLES E. FAIRMAN COMMUNITY POOL
- (H) MECOSTA COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION
- (I) MECOSTA COUNTY HISTORIC MUSEUM
- (J) BERGELIN HOUSE HISTORIC PRESERVATION
- (K) SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT
- (M) MECOSTA COUNTY BUILDING
- (N) OLD JAIL HISTORIC PRESERVATION
- (O) BIG RAPIDS COMMUNITY LIBRARY

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS MASTER PLAN MAP 3 POINTS OF INTEREST

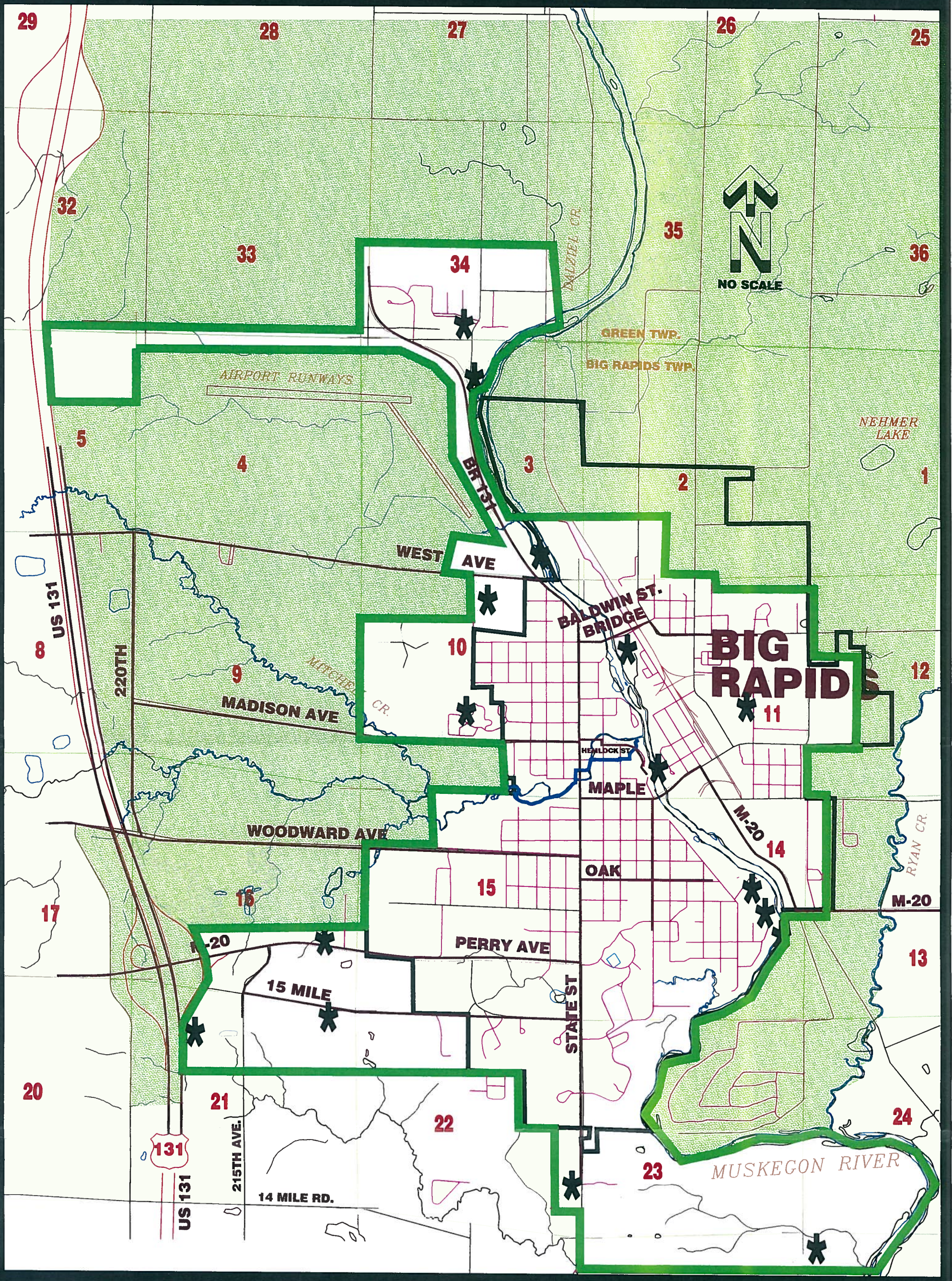
Big Rapids Public Facilities

City Hall – Big Rapids City Hall is located at 226 North Michigan Avenue (Map 3). It houses the administrative offices of the City and is the primary space for public meetings. Departments within City Hall include City Manager, Clerk, Treasurer, Public Works, Assessing, Transportation, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services.





Public Safety – Big Rapids Public Safety is housed in facilities located at 435 North Michigan Avenue. The City's police and fire divisions are housed in the facility that was built in 2003 (Map 3).

Wastewater Treatment – The Wastewater Treatment Plant, located at 500 River Street (Map 3), is responsible for the processing of waste traveling through the City of Big Rapids' sewer lines. They inspect and help maintain all sewer lines throughout the City. This plant also must comply with various codes and regulations dealing with environmental health and safety. The plant processes waste and refines it into clean water that is eventually put back into the Muskegon River. Map 4 identifies the current sanitary service area served by the City of Big Rapids that are located in the City of Big Rapids, Big Rapids Township, and Green Township. Map 4 also identifies areas that could be served in the future if funding is available and if demand from businesses, residents, and surrounding townships is present. Map 5 identifies the storm water service area served by the City of Big Rapids that are located in the City of Big Rapids. Map 5 also identifies areas that could be served in the future if funding is available and if demand from businesses, residents, and the surrounding township is present.

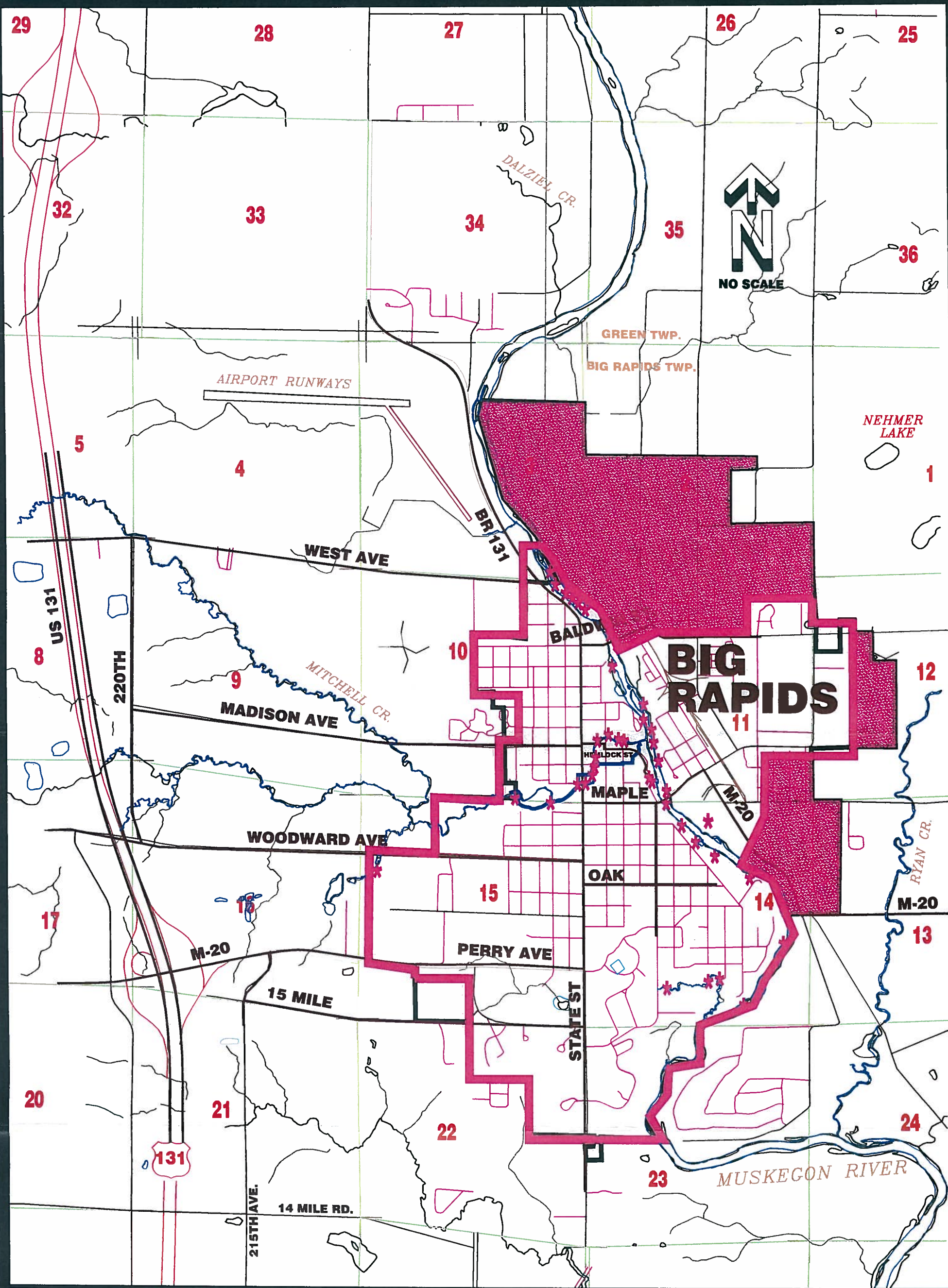
Water Treatment – The Water Treatment Plant, located at 730 Osceola (Map 3), provides clean drinking water to the City of Big Rapids. The Water Treatment Plant treats groundwater and transports it to homes, businesses, and public facilities. This department is also responsible for the metering and maintenance of all water lines throughout the City of Big Rapids. The area has an abundant source of groundwater that is withdrawn by one or more of the four wells, which have a combined capacity of 3,750 gallons per minute. The water is transmitted to the water treatment plant where the water is aerated, settled, disinfected and filtered before being pumped to the distribution system. Trace amounts of fluoride are added to reduce dental caries. Plant staff monitors the water to ensure that it meets all federal and state drinking water standards. Map 6 identifies the existing water service area in the City of Big Rapids and Big Rapids Township and the map also identifies areas that could be served in the future if funding is available and if demand from businesses, residents, and the surrounding townships is available.







LEGEND NOT TO SCALE

-  = CITY LIMITS
-  = CURRENT SERVICE AREA
-  = LIFT STATION, TREATMENT FACILITY
-  = POTENTIAL SERVICE AREA

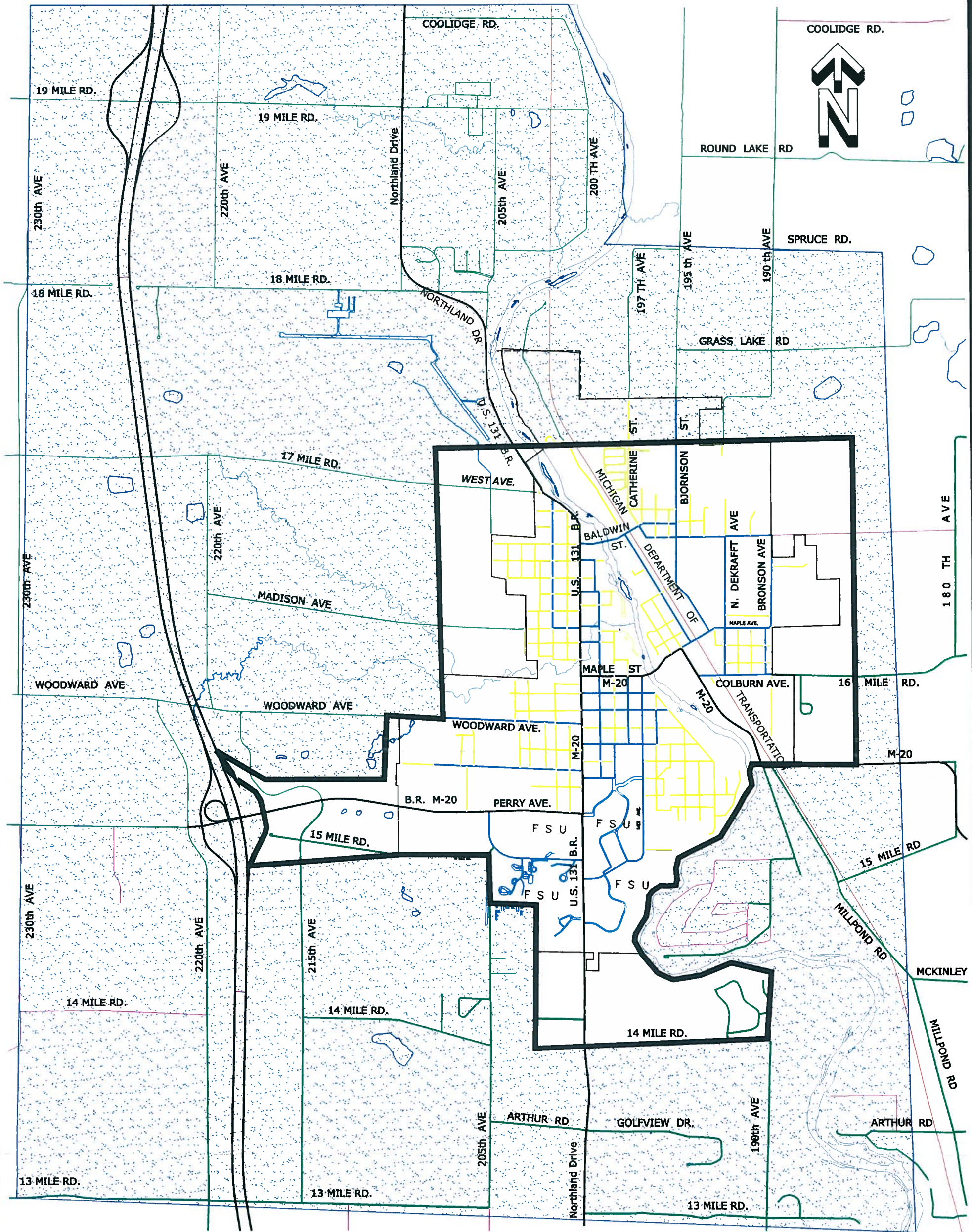
CITY OF BIG RAPIDS MASTER PLAN MAP 4 SANITARY SERVICE AREA



LEGEND  NOT TO SCALE

-  = CITY LIMITS
-  = CURRENT SERVICE AREA
-  = STORM PIPE OUTFALL
-  = POTENTIAL SERVICE AREA

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS MASTER PLAN MAP 5 - STORM WATER SERVICE AREA



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LEGEND



NOT TO SCALE

- = CITY LIMITS
- = CURRENT SERVICE AREA
- = POTENTIAL SERVICE AREA

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS MASTER PLAN MAP 6 - WATER SERVICE AREA

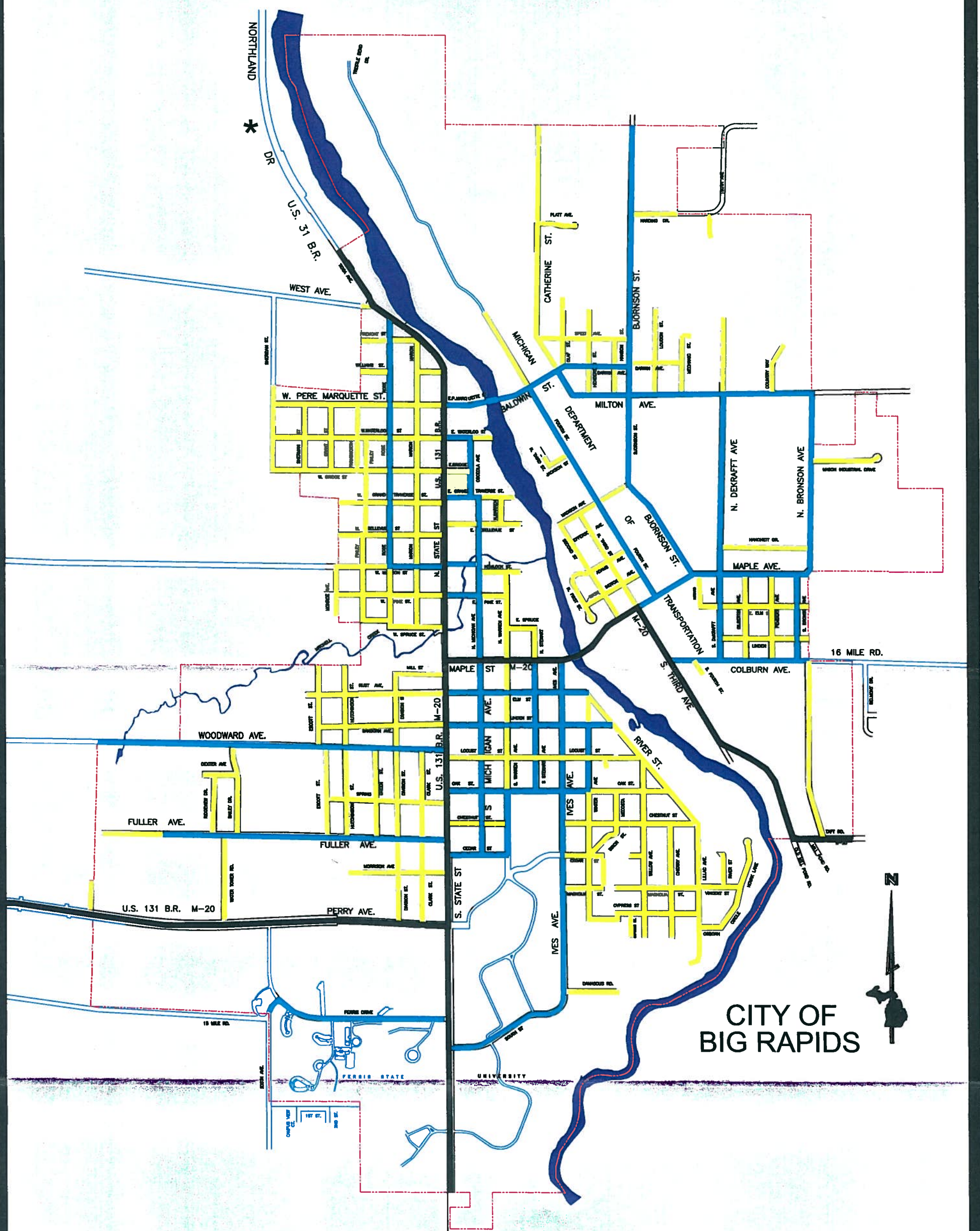
Parks and Recreation – The City of Big Rapids maintains an extensive network of parks and trails. The City maintains an up-to-date Park and Recreation Master Plan in order to guide development and maintain eligibility for grants from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and the U.S. Land and Water Conservation Fund. The City maintains the following parks:

- Northend Riverside Park, 144.8 acres
- Seede Hill Park, 2.8 acres
- Hanchett Park, 1.3 acres
- Industrial Park Ballfield, 9.0 acres
- Vogel Fields, 6.6 acres
- Riverwalk, 6.0 acres (with White Pine Trail)
- Hemlock Park, 10.4 acres
- Holland Park, 0.3 acres
- Pocket Park, 0.1 acres
- Mitchell Creek Park, 1.8 acres
- Charles E. Fairman Community Pool Complex, 6.4 acres
- River Street Park, 16.5 acres
- Centennial Park, 0.9 acres
- Linden Street Park, 0.2 acres
- Library Park, 0.4 acres
- Supervisor's Park, 2.2 acres
- Mitchell Creek Nature Preserve (located in City and Township), 48 acres

Transportation

Roadways – Big Rapids is served by several major transportation systems. US-131, a limited access expressway, is located just west of the City. US-131 links Big Rapids to Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and other points to the south; and Cadillac to the north. Interchanges are located at 15 Mile Road and 19 Mile Road. M-20, a state route that goes through the City, links Big Rapids to Mount Pleasant to the east and Newaygo and Oceana counties to the west. Map 7 identifies Big Rapids' streets and breaks them into the three categories of major street, local street, and state highway. The road system consists of State Trunk Lines with M-20 serving as a major east-west corridor through the City (and Mecosta County). There are only two river crossings (bridges) in the City of Big Rapids (Maple/M-20 and Marquette/Baldwin Street). Responsibility for maintenance of these roads falls on the City of Big Rapids, Mecosta County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

Transit – Dial-A-Ride (DART) serves the Big Rapids with a modern lineup of public transit services. The network of seven buses, including lift-equipped buses, serves more than 100,000 riders annually. The transit facilities are located at 1829 North State Street (Map 7).



LEGEND  NOT TO SCALE

- AVG. DAILY TRAFFIC COUNT IS 1,275
- * = DIAL-A-RIDE
 - - - = CITY LIMITS
 - Blue line = MAJOR STREET
 - Yellow line = LOCAL STREET
 - Thick black line = STATE HWY.

CITY OF BIG RAPIDS MASTER PLAN MAP 7 TRANSPROTATION FACILITIES

Outside of the City, the Mecosta/Osceola Area Transit Authority (MOTA) is an on-demand “dial-a-ride” public transportation system operating in both Mecosta and Osceola counties.

Airport – Roben-Hood Airport is a class A commercial airport, consisting of a 4,300 ft. main runway and several outlying buildings. Plans are underway to extend the runway to 5,000 feet. The City of Big Rapids owns the airport.

Rail – There is no passenger or freight rail service in Big Rapids.

Mecosta County Medical Center

Big Rapids’ medical needs are served by the Mecosta County Medical Center (MCMC), which is growing into a regional health center owned by Mecosta County and located on the City’s southeast side (Map 3). The hospital is a progressive acute-care facility located in the City of Big Rapids. This 74-bed hospital also maintains the Mecosta Health Services, a multi-specialty practice located in the City of Big Rapids and Canadian Lakes. Twenty-five physicians are on active staff, with approximately 300 people employed both full and part time by the Hospital. The Hospital also provides educational opportunities for the community. C.P.R classes, prenatal, baby-sitting, stress management, support groups, nutritional counseling, and classes on diabetes are some of the opportunities offered. The hospital also provides a physical rehabilitation center that services a multi-county area. (Source: www.mcghhospital.com). The hospital creates the demand for other healthcare related facilities in and around the City of Big Rapids.

Ambulance Services

Emergency medical services to residents of Big Rapids are dispatched out of the Mesceola Consolidated Central Dispatch, which covers all entities within the Mecosta-Osceola area. The dispatch service is located in Paris, in northern Mecosta County, but easily contacted through the area’s 911 system. The Mecosta County Emergency Medical Service is operated by the County. Aero Med also maintains a helicopter and team at Roben Hood Airport for rapidly transporting patients to Grand Rapids or other destinations.

Industrial Parks

The Big Rapids area has two designated Industrial Parks, Big Rapids Airport Industrial Park in Big Rapids Township, and the Big Rapids Industrial Park in the City of Big Rapids.

The Airport Industrial Park is on 135 acres of land and is classified as a Renaissance Zone. The park is located near US-131 and the Roben-Hood Airport for easy transportation access. The park’s focus is light industry and information technology and has all new infrastructure either in-place or under development.

The Big Rapids Industrial Park is under private ownership and runs under lease arrangements. The City of Big Rapids provides water and sewer service and its focus is light industry.

Library System

The Big Rapids Community Library is located at 426 S. Michigan Avenue (Map 3). The library serves the City's population and the citizens of Big Rapids, Colfax, Grant, and Green Townships under contract. The library also services Barton, Home, and Norwich townships in Newaygo County. The total service population is 20,739.

As a member of the statewide MichiCard program, the Big Rapids Community Library and its patrons can access other MichiCard libraries across the State of Michigan at no additional cost. The Big Rapids Community Library is also connected to Ferris State University through the Ferrisnet Organization. This allows members of the Library to access materials at Ferris State University's Library while allowing students, faculty, and staff of Ferris State to borrow materials from the Big Rapids Community Library.

The Ferris Library for Information, Technology and Education (FLITE) is another library providing services. The library has over 170,000 gross square feet, 60 study rooms, 300 networked computers, and capacity for 440,000 printed materials (Source: www.ferris.edu/library). The Library is also the site of one of three patent and trademark depositories in the state.

Ferris State University

Ferris State University, Originally founded in 1884 by Woodbridge N. Ferris, has evolved into a modern 880-acre campus. Undergraduate and graduate degrees, including doctorates and masters, are offered in more than 170 educational programs. The University, located within the City of Big Rapids and Big Rapids Township, is a degree granting University with an average enrollment of 14,000 – with 10,000 at the Big Rapids College Campus. There are seven colleges based in Big Rapids: College of Applied Health Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business, College of Education and Human Services, College of Optometry, College of Pharmacy, College of Engineering Technology, and the University College. Additionally, there are two colleges in Grand Rapids, and other opportunities across Michigan. Ferris State University employs over 500 faculty members and 1,200 staff, making it Mecosta County's largest employer (Source: www.ferris.edu). While it is difficult to determine how many of Ferris' staff resides in the City, the impact on the City's economy is very great.

EXISTING LAND USE

Influences

The City of Big Rapids' existing land use distribution is influenced by a range of features. These features have shaped the City in the past and will continue to influence the City into the future.

The Muskegon River, which runs through the City, was a key reason the City was originally formed. Being divided by a river provides both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities relate to people's desire to be close to water – recreation, residential, and commercial uses are all enhanced by proximity to water. Challenges relate to flooding and limited access points (bridges) that divide the City.

Transportation has played a key role in shaping the City. In the past, the railway passed through the City of Big Rapids, but the rail has left and what remains is now a recreation resource (Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park). M-20 passes through the City, bringing east-west traffic between US-131 and Mt. Pleasant. Northland Drive (Business US-131) passes through the City in a north-south direction and is a key route in town that is a key feature of the City – with both strengths and weaknesses. Also, while west of the City Limits, US-131 is key to the City's future. Another transportation feature that will influence how the City grows is the Roben Hood Airport, on the north side of the City (City-owned but in Big Rapids Township).

Ferris State University occupies a large part of the City and is vital to Big Rapids' future. While the City does not have much control over development on campus, the areas around the University are the responsibility of the City and influence the vitality and character of the City.

The City's Downtown is an important part of the community and is how many people define the community – a vital downtown is essential to the image of any City. While the Downtown's boundaries are pretty well defined, there are some transition areas that need to be improved. The Downtown does have room for limited growth in almost any direction, but there are hard boundaries that cannot be avoided – such as Northland Drive, the Muskegon River, and Ferris State University.

The fact that Big Rapids is the County Seat for Mecosta County influences development. Many government facilities are located within the City. County facilities are located south of Downtown, City facilities are located Downtown, County Road Commission Facilities are located on the east side of the River, State and Federal offices are located on the City's west side, and other public facilities are located across the City. While these facilities do not generate property taxes for the City, they do bring people into the City and provide jobs for the area's residents.

Methodology

The City of Big Rapids generated the Existing Land Use Map and the acreage figures from existing files that are maintained by the City. Categories appropriate for the Master Plan were developed and will be used in the Future Land Use Map to insure continuity and allow for changes to be tracked.

Existing Land Use Categories

Residential Categories

There are four designated categories of residential uses. The total amount of land used for residential purposes in 2009 was 784 acres, or 28.0 percent of the City's area.

Single Family Residential – This category includes unattached single-unit homes. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to traditional dwelling units such as garages and storage sheds. This category does not differentiate between ownership options (owner-occupied, renter-occupied, or condominium). Due to the developed nature of the City there is no differentiation between high density, medium density, and low density single family homes – since most single family homes in the City are developed on fairly compact lots.

In 2009 Single-Family Residential covered 618 acres, or 22.1 percent of the City. Map 8 shows that Single Family Residential uses occurred throughout the City.

Two-Four Unit Residential – This category includes attached housing with two, three, or four units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, storage sheds, and other related uses.

In 2009 Multiple Family (2-4 family units) land uses covered 39 acres, or 1.4 percent of the City's area. Map 8 shows 2-4 unit residential units located throughout most portions of the City.

Apartment Complex – This category includes attached housing with five or more units that are located in large grouped units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, maintenance facilities, storage sheds, administrative offices, club houses, recreation areas, and other related uses.

In 2009 Multiple Family land uses covered 79 acres, or 2.8 percent of the City's area. Map 8 shows multiple family complexes located on the east side of the Muskegon River and along Fuller Avenue on the City's south side.

Mobile Home Parks – This category includes areas where mobile homes or other types of homes manufactured off site are located. This category only occurs where larger clusters of such housing occur, such as mobile home parks.

Mobile Homes covered 48 acres in 2009, or 1.7 percent of Big Rapids' area. Map 8 shows that such housing is located in two areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Public and Quasi-Public Categories

Government – This category includes a wide variety of land uses including municipal offices, federal, state, and county office facilities, maintenance facilities, and other areas maintained by a government unit or department. The category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

Government uses covered 55 acres in 2009, or 2.0 percent of the City. Map 8 shows concentrations throughout the Downtown, on the east side of the Muskegon River, and on the City's west side.

Schools – The category includes public, private, and charter schools (K-12). The category includes all support buildings, school-related recreation areas, parking areas, and other related uses.

School uses covered 72 acres in 2009, or 2.6 percent of the City's land. Map 8 shows schools located throughout the City.

Churches – The category includes all types of religious facilities. The category includes all support buildings, parking areas, and other related uses.

Churches covered 60 acres in 2009, or 2.1 percent of the City's land. Map 8 shows Churches located throughout the portion of the City on the west side of the Muskegon River.

Ferris State University – The University occupies 482 acres on the City's south side. This represents 17.2 percent of the City's area. There are a wide range of uses within the University's campus including classrooms, offices, dormitories, maintenance facilities, and other support facilities.

City & State Park – This category refers to the City's outdoor recreation areas and the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park that passes through the City's east side. This category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

In 2009 parks covered 263 acres, or 9.4 percent of Big Rapids' area. Map 8 shows the City's parks are located along the Muskegon River and in several residential areas.

Business Categories

Industrial – This category includes sites where any type of manufacturing process occurs. Industries can include those that produce various emissions in the process (smoke, odor, noise, light, vibrations, etc.) or those that do not produce emissions detectable to surrounding areas – such as the assembly of parts shipped from other facilities.

Industrial uses covered 186 acres in 2009, or 6.6 percent of the City. Map 8 shows industrial sites exist primarily on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Commercial – This category includes retail and wholesale businesses, business and professional services, personal services, and other businesses that provide goods or services to the general public. The category includes any buildings associated with the land use, as well as surrounding land, outdoor structures, parking areas, access areas, and other related areas.

Commercial covered 238 acres in 2009, or 8.5 percent of the City's area. Map 8 shows that commercial is focused on Perry Street, State Street, the City's Downtown, and in areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

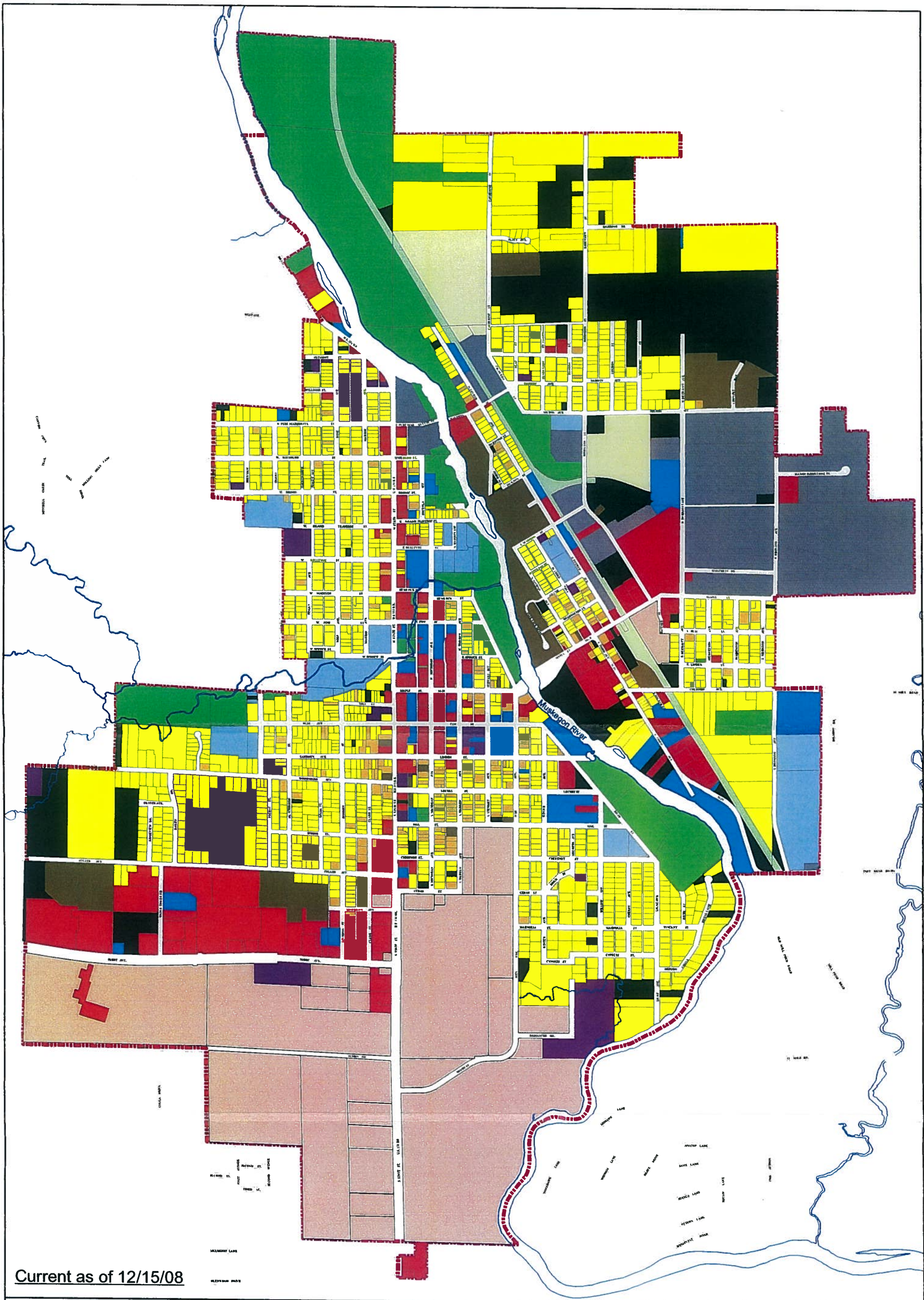
Vacant

In 2009 there were 219 acres of vacant land in the City of Big Rapids, representing 7.8 percent of the City's area. The majority of the vacant land is located adjacent to residential areas, but there are also vacant parcels in commercial and industrial areas.

Table 13: Existing Land Use Distribution

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percentage
Residential		
Single Family Residential	619	22.1
Two-Four Unit Residential	39	1.4
Apartment Complex	79	2.8
Mobile Home Parks	48	1.7
Public and Quasi-Public Categories		
Government	55	2.0
Schools	71	2.5
Churches	60	2.1
Ferris State University	482	17.2
City & State Park	263	9.4
Business Categories		
Industrial	186	6.6
Commercial	238	8.5
Vacant	219	7.8
Other (Streets, Roads, Water)	441	15.8
Total	2,800	100.0

Source: City of Big Rapids



Current as of 12/15/08

- Legend**
- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Apartment Complex | City Park | River |
| Churches | Public/Private Schools | City Boundary |
| Commercial | Residential (single units) | |
| Ferris State University | Residential (2-4 units) | |
| Industrial | Vacant | |
| Government | White Pine Trail | |
| Mobile Home Park | | |



City Of Big Rapids Master Plan Map 8 Existing Landuse

DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

Population Projections

Table 14 shows that between 2000 and 2020 the City of Big Rapids' population is projected to increase by 677 residents (6.2 percent increase). This projection is difficult to predict since it depends on Ferris State University's enrollment and the University has made several facility and program changes meant to increase enrollment. Additionally, a lot of student housing has been developed in Big Rapids Township since the last Census in 2000 was performed – which influences both the population and housing projections. This figure is tied to the Community Goals, which should be referred to when looking at future projections.

While the City is projected to grow by 6.2 percent, Mecosta County is projected to increase from 40,553 residents in 2000 to 55,762 in 2020 (37.5 percent). Both surrounding townships are expected to grow much more than the City, with Big Rapids Township projected to increase by 66.5 percent and Green Township projected to grow by 28.8 percent.

These population projections are based on trends and recent development. Many things can influence the trends including planning, community goals, the economy, marketing, economic development, and others. These same projections are used in this plan to project the age/gender distribution and housing needs for the City.

Table 14: Population Projections

AREA	POPULATION					CHANGE 2000-2020	
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	#	%
City of Big Rapids	10,849	11,017	11,186	11,356	11,526	677	6.2
Big Rapids Township	3,249	4,256	4,775	5,147	5,410	2,161	66.5
Green Township	3,208	3,416	3,635	3,866	4,133	925	28.8
Mecosta County	40,553	43,116	46,296	50,366	55,762	15,209	37.5
Michigan	9,938,444	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Age and Gender Distribution Projections

The age and gender projections (Table 15) are based on trends from between 1990 and 2000. Since Big Rapids' population is so dependent on Ferris State University and where students are motivated to live (the City of Big Rapids or surrounding townships), these projections should be used with an understanding that they probably do not accurately reflect the population, but that they represent likely figures if past actions are projected into the future (such as housing choices and student counts).

The projections indicate that the college-age population (18-24) will remain as the largest age group, but will make up a smaller percentage of the City's population – decreasing from 50.8 percent of the population in 2000 to 35.6 percent in 2020. The second biggest group, those between 25 and 44 will increase as a percentage of the City's population

from 17.2 percent in 2000 to 23.6 percent in 2020 – since this is the child-bearing age, it follows that the number of children will increase as a percentage of the City’s population during the same period. Residents between 45 and 54 are also projected to increase as a percentage of the City’s population. While it does not follow other communities, trends show a decreasing proportion of residents over 55 in the City of Big Rapids. Since the proportion of college age students is projected to decrease, it follows that the percentage of males decreases in the City (since FSU has a higher percentage of males).

Table 15: Age and Gender Distribution Projections

	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 5	575	5.3%	805	7.2	1,049	9.1
5-17	1077	9.9%	1,421	12.7	1,775	15.4
18-24	5532	50.8%	4,877	43.6	4,138	35.9
25-44	1873	17.2%	2,304	20.6	2,720	23.6
45-54	709	6.5%	861	7.7	1,118	9.7
55-64	317	2.9%	224	2.0	127	1.1
65 and over	802	7.4%	694	6.2	576	5.0
Median Age	21.8	---	22.1	----	22.3	---
Male	5,668	52.2	5,783	51.7	5,901	51.2
Female	5,181	47.8	5,402	48.3	5,625	48.8
Total	10,849	100.0	11,186	100.0%	11,526	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Household Distribution Projections

The projected number of households is expected to grow at a greater rate than the population due to projections indicating household sizes continue to decrease (Table 16). By 2020, projections indicate there will be 3,965 households within Big Rapids. This represents an increase of 17.0 percent, while the population is projected to increase by 6.2 percent. Within the household types, the percentage of family households is projected to slightly decrease; and within the family households category, the percentage of married family households is also expected to decrease. Conversely, the percentage of non-family households is expected to slightly increase; and within the non-family households category, the percentage of one-person households is expected to increase, and the percentage of one-person households (65 and over) is projected to remain fairly stable. Overall, the average household size is projected to decrease from 2.3 persons per household in 2000, to 2.1 in 2020.

Housing Projections

Housing units are expected to continue to increase as the City’s population increases, as households decrease in size, and as vacancy rates decrease (Table 17). Projections indicate that between 2000 and 2020 the number of housing units will increase to 4,196 with an occupancy rate of 94.5 percent.

Table 16: Household Distribution Projections

	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS				NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS			PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD	PERSONS IN GROUP QUARTERS
		Total	Married Couple Family	Female Householder with no Spouse	Male Householder with no Spouse	Total	Householder Living Alone	Householder 65 & Over Living Alone		
2000	3,388	1,474	899	485	90	1,914	1,210	333	2.3	3,197
%	100.0	43.5	26.5	14.3	2.7	56.5	35.7	9.8	---	---
2010	3,630	1,564	853	617	105	2,058	1,419	356	2.2	3,200
%	100.0	43.3	23.5	17.0	2.9	56.7	39.1	9.8	---	---
2020	3,965	1,709	872	718	119	2,256	1,618	389	2.1	---
%	100.0	43.1	22.0	18.1	3.0	56.9	40.8	9.8	---	---

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Table 17: Housing Projections

	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Housing Units	3,564	100.0	3,878	100.0	4,196	100.0
Occupied	3,388	92.7	3,630	93.6	3,965	94.5
Vacant	266	7.3	248	6.4	231	5.5

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Housing Type Projections

Projections shown in Table 18 indicate an increasing percentage of single family units, increasing from 1,563 units in 2000 (43.7 percent) to 1,901 units in 2020 (45.3 percent). Trends also indicate an increase in the "2 to 4 units" category, increasing to 995 units. The number of units in the "5 to 9" category is projected to remain fairly stable, increasing to 474 units by 2020 and the number of units in the "10 or more" category is projected to decline. The number of mobile homes is projected to grow at the same rate as the number of total units.

Table 18: Housing Type Projections

Housing Type	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1 unit	1,563	43.7	1,726	44.5	1,901	45.3
2 to 4 units	767	21.5	876	22.6	995	25.7
5 to 9 units	427	11.9	450	11.6	474	11.3
10 or more units	576	16.1	562	14.5	541	12.9
Mobile Home, Trailer or Other	245	6.8	264	6.8	285	6.8
Total Units	3,578	100.0	3,878	100.0	4,196	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This plan relies on a variety of forms of public participation to identify issues, establish goals, and develop an action plan for the City to follow. The following sections describe “key person interviews,” issue identification workshops, focus groups, a community survey, and a public hearing process.

Key Person Interviews

The first step in the public participation process involved interviewing “key people” identified by the Big Rapids Planning Commission. Face-to-face interviews occurred on March 28, 2008 and April 1, 2008. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and consisted of four open-ended questions about the existing strengths and weaknesses of Big Rapids, and opportunities and threats, which are either in the future or are events that influence Big Rapids, but that Big Rapids has very little power to change.

The following people participated in the interviews:

- Lynn Anderson, City Commissioner
- Sue Bean, Planning Commission
- Peggy Brennan, City Commissioner
- Mary Jane Cook, Planning Commission
- Sam Daugherty, MCMC
- Mary Doran, Project Starburst
- Rick Duffett, Ferris State University
- Susan Glatz, B. R. Property Owners
- Claire Gould, FSU Student
- Dave Hamelund, Manufacturer
- Terry Harper, City Commissioner
- Jerry Henderson, Salvation Army
- Tom Hogenson, City Commissioner
- Kathy Hooley, Planning Commission
- Paul Jackson, Planning Commission
- Jane Johansen, Planning Commission
- Mike Lafferty, Roben Hood Airport
- Carol Larimer, Planning Commission
- Tom Langdon, Public Schools
- Steve Legget, Business Owner
- Jeff Mossel, Business Owner
- Wayne O’Neil, Big Rapids Township
- Brian Pacholka, Planning Commission
- Jim Peek, Green Township Trustee
- Emily Robison, Business Owner
- Bill Routley, County Commissioner
- Mary Ryan, Good Neighbors
- Tyler Schuberg, Business Owner
- Steve Sobers, City Manager
- Mark Sochocki, Housing Commission
- Dan Spedowske, Planning Commission
- Mark Warba, Mayor
- Frank West, Public Safety
- Eric Williams, City Attorney
- Dave Bee, Interviewer
- Lynne Scheible, Interviewer

In order to provide readers with a frame of reference for comparing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, a list of ten categories was developed that is the same grouping for each of the four questions.

While descriptions of the answers are listed by the number of comments, the listings do not necessarily reflect the importance or prioritization of the categories since. Some categories may have been listed several times by people (Public Facilities and Programs for example), while other categories might only be listed once (FSU for example).

Question #1: What are the existing strengths of the City of Big Rapids?

Government (47 comments) – Participants listed a variety of strengths related to local government. Good leadership, programs and staff, and the fact that the City works well with others (interdepartmental, outside government organizations, business) led the comments. Positive comments about Mecosta County government were also common, including that the City and County work well together and the fact that the County Seat, and most of the County’s administrative functions remain in the City. The fact that Big Rapids has been able to secure funding (especially grants) for a wide range of projects was also a popular topic with many of the people interviewed. Many also felt the City is willing to try new approaches to address issues – such as the team approach the City is taking with the update of the Master Plan and the variety of public participation techniques used in the process. The City has many strong departments, such as Public Safety, and other public agencies, such as the Housing Commission, that people frequently listed as strengths.

Public Facilities and Programs (46 Comments) – Interviewees listed many public and quasi-public facilities as strengths. The Big Rapids Public Schools were the most cited public facility, but the private and charter schools were also listed by participants. The Mecosta County Medical Center, in the heart of Big Rapids, was listed as a major strength for both providing medical services and as a good source of employment. US-131 was listed as a strength many times and M-20 was listed by a few of the participants. Roben Hood Airport was listed by many participants, as was the Big Rapids Community Library. The Fairman Pool and the Public Safety Building were both listed and some general statements about the availability of a wide range of infrastructure were also cited by participants as strengths.

Quality of Life (43 Comments) – Many of the people interviewed listed strengths that have been grouped under “quality of life” (really all of the strengths are quality of life issues). The small town character was listed by many as a strength, especially when mixed with the level of services and programs available. The City’s central location in Michigan, and the fact that it is surrounded by miles of rural areas was frequently listed as a strength. People appreciate that the City is very “walkable” due to its small size and network of sidewalks and trails. Those interviewed also cited the fact that the area is secure, safe, and growing as a strength.

Recreation, Tourism, and Natural Features (43 Comments) – The people interviewed were very proud of the many recreation and tourism opportunities available. The Riverwalk was the most cited feature, followed closely by the Muskegon River and the City’s overall network of parks. Festivals and programs were also listed.

Downtown (37 Comments) – People interviewed listed many of the Downtown’s features as strengths. People like the size and appearance of the downtown, as well as the mix of businesses, public services, and amenities. The downtown planning project and funding opportunities were also listed as a strength by many participants. Having seniors

downtown, especially in the Nisbett-Fairman Residences) was cited as a major strength. Several individual businesses and programs were also listed by those interviewed.

Ferris State University (26 Comments) – Many participants identified Ferris State University as a major strength in the community. The University provides a wide range of employment, brings thousands of students into Big Rapids, provides a variety of cultural, sporting, and educational events, and is a major part of the community's identity. The University and its students are also available as a community resource for many types of projects.

People (16 Comments) – Interviewees listed the City's residents as a strength – since they are willing to get involved in local issues and provide excitement for the future. Even the City's demographics were listed (younger and lower income) as an opportunity to acquire grants.

Economy, Business, and Industry (11 Comments) – The area's economy was listed by several participants as a strength. People felt the City does a good job promoting business and that the area's economy is more diverse than other parts of Michigan, making it less vulnerable to the cyclical nature of many businesses. Participants also listed the workforce as a strength.

Housing and Neighborhoods (3 Comments) – The condition of housing and neighborhoods was listed a strength by a few participants.

Retail (2 Comments) – Outside of the downtown area, there were not many comments related to retail as a strength.

Question #2: What are the existing weaknesses of the City of Big Rapids?

Government (64 Comments) – Many of the weaknesses cited by participants relate to the relationship between the City and the surrounding township(s). The fact that Big Rapids is "landlocked" and has limited land available for development was listed many times as a weakness. Additionally, the development that has occurred in Big Rapids Township is placing stress on the City's infrastructure and services. Closely related to the relationship between the City and townships are the issues of sprawl, tax differences between the City and townships, and duplication of government services. Another weakness that was frequently cited related to the ability to fund projects and programs due to decreases in State Revenue Sharing and the high percentage of tax exempt properties within the City. Many other weaknesses were listed one or two times by participants, but the overwhelming number of comments somehow related to the City's relationship with Big Rapids Township (and to a much smaller degree to Green Township) and the ability to fund the City's operations. One interesting comment that could be left in this category or moved to FSU or Housing and Neighborhoods, related to the issues created by locating student focused housing in Big Rapids Township – doing so created several issues related to pedestrian traffic (lack of sidewalks in the Township), parking (increases need on campus), and the impact on housing stock in the City.

Housing and Neighborhoods (36 Comments) – Many participants listed housing as a weakness in Big Rapids. Homeownership is traditionally seen as a way to promote well-maintained housing and neighborhoods, but the demand for student housing over the years has created a high percentage of rental units in many areas of Big Rapids and the conversion of single family homes to multiple family units. This has also made the preservation of historic homes difficult. While participants recognize that there are many good landlords in Big Rapids, they cited many examples of landlords that do not adequately maintain their properties, which can quickly influence adjacent properties. Many participants also listed the condition of the Eastside as an issue.

Public Facilities and Programs (29 Comments) – Over one-third of the comments under this category related to the ongoing issue with the Big Rapids Community Library. While some felt the library should remain where it is, and others felt it should be moved, almost everybody felt that it will remain an issue until a decision is made – but that once action is taken everybody will settle into the new or improved facilities. Traffic in different areas was frequently cited. Many recognized that the Wastewater Treatment Plant needs improved and that funding such a project will present challenges. Other weaknesses cited listed one or two times include maintenance of public buildings, aging infrastructure, inadequate area-wide transit, lack of sidewalks outside of the City (to Wal-Mart and Meijer), and inadequate support of some non-profit programs.

Ferris State University (18 Comments) – While FSU is seen as a strength, it was also listed by several participants as a weakness due to the demands it places on the City's infrastructure and services, and the perception that the two units do not have as positive of a relationship as possible. Many also felt that FSU faculty and staff do not live in Big Rapids and that there is little positive interaction between the City and students. Parking on campus is an issue and pedestrian-auto conflicts are also a concern.

Economy, Business, and Industry (14 Comments) – Interview participants cited high unemployment and low per capita income as weaknesses in the area. There were also a few comments related to workforce training, availability of land for industrial development, and business retention efforts.

Recreation, Tourism, and Natural Features (6 Comments) – While recreation was frequently cited as a strength, there are a few areas that people feel can be improved. One item relates to identifying, through signs, where the City's parks are located. Another item relates to providing more recreational opportunities for young people.

Retail (5 Comments) – Comments related to development outside of the downtown area detracting from the downtown. The lack of adequate retail opportunities was also listed.

Downtown (5 Comments) – Again, the Downtown was frequently listed as a strength but several weaknesses were listed including lack of streetscaping and a grocery store. Also, people questioned the amount of attention given to the downtown and the need for a DBA and a DDA.

Quality of Life (3 Comments) – Very few negative comments were taken related to quality of life, but one cited being a small town as a weakness, vandalism was listed, and people leaving the area create issues.

People (1 Comment) – Certain groups seem to run the show

Question #3: What opportunities do you see for Big Rapids?

Economy, Business, and Industry (28 Comments) – Many of those interviewed identified the Economy, Business, and Industry as an opportunity in Big Rapids. Many felt that marketing Big Rapids as more of a destination and placing more emphasis on business attraction would create economic benefits. Closely related to promotion, is maintaining a positive attitude and building on past successes. Expanding and promoting the business parks (inside and outside of the City) were both listed, as well as improving facilities that serve the industrial areas. While diversification of jobs is important, many emphasized the importance of industry and manufacturing to the success of the area. Other points included the need to train/retrain the workforce and the potential for agricultural “value added” industries.

Public Facilities and Programs (25 Comments) – Interviewees identified many opportunities related to the area’s public facilities and programs. Expansion and improvement of Roben Hood Airport was a very popular response. Renewable energy programs and improving the Big Rapids Community Library were also listed by several individuals. Many other individual responses were received such as relocating the senior center from Mecosta to Big Rapids, consolidation of health services, improving the aesthetics of the community, expanding public transit, building a parking structure to open up land for other development, seasonal events, Aero Med, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, and consolidating many small events into a few larger events.

Downtown (24 Comments) – Just as downtown was seen as a strength; it was also seen as an opportunity. Maintaining an emphasis on Downtown is seen as an opportunity, promoting local shopping, creating more retail opportunities, and implementing other physical and operational changes are all potential opportunities.

Ferris State University (20 Comments) – Ferris State University was listed by many participants as an opportunity. Everything from capitalizing on many of the University’s programs (such as the plastics and polymers) to working better with the administration and students were seen as opportunities.

People (18 Comments) – Many of the respondents listed attracting senior citizens as a major opportunity for improving the downtown. Many people felt this is a good mix due to the walkability of the downtown and providing a base of customers for businesses. There were also several comments related to expanding opportunities for young people and children.

Recreation, Tourism, and Natural Features (18 Comments) – Recreation and tourism were seen as an opportunity for the quality of life of residents and for the economic benefits associated with tourism.

Housing and Neighborhoods (16 Comments) – Since housing and neighborhoods was seen by many as a weakness, it is not surprising that making improvements to housing and neighborhoods would be an opportunity. Encouraging homeownership is seen as key to the future as well as programs to promote historic preservation.

Government (14 Comments) – Improving relationships with other units of government was listed as an opportunity, as was creating better linkages between different areas within the City. Following through on plans, continuously seeking outside funding assistance, rezoning areas to promote growth and development, and developing seed projects across the community were all listed as potential opportunities.

Retail (8 Comments) – Several opportunities were listed that related to further development around the interchange.

Quality of Life (4 Comments) – The City's location in West Michigan was the primary opportunity listed under this heading.

Question #4: What threats do you see for Big Rapids?

Government (28 Comments) – Continued conflicts between the City and the surrounding township(s) is seen as a threat that can impact the success of the area. The ability to properly plan for the area, sprawl, and the negative impact to businesses in the downtown were closely related statements. Michigan's leadership was cited several times and funding municipal services was also listed as threats.

Economy, Business, and Industry (26 Comments) – The poor state of Michigan's economy was the overwhelming response in this category. Fuel costs were also cited as were issues such as the need to balance economic development and the environment, and the perception that growth is not desirable in Big Rapids.

Housing and Neighborhoods (12 Comments) – The effects of rental housing on neighborhoods, deteriorating housing, and the current real estate market were all listed as threats to the success of Big Rapids.

Public Facilities and Programs (6 Comments) – The City's aging infrastructure was the most cited threat, including the wastewater treatment plant.

People (5 Comments) – The loss of people was listed as a threat to the area.

Retail (2 Comments) – The need for balance related to retail was cited as a threat.

Downtown (2 Comments) – Overspending on the downtown, at the risk of under funding other parts of the community was cited as a threat.

Quality of Life (2 Comments) – The loss of small town feel and more crime are potential threats.

Ferris State University (1 Comment) – Very few good jobs in area – Ferris State University professors not on tenure track and very few full-time jobs at FSU

Recreation, Tourism, and Natural Features (1 Comment) – Focus on industry over natural resources could be a threat and impact water quality.

Other Comments:

- Need to look at the best practices of successful communities to raise the quality of life in Big Rapids
- Master Plan needs to be a good roadmap and more specific in recommendations than the previous plan
- Questions about who benefits from a tax increment finance authority
- Language in plan is important for attracting grants
- Seem to be able to address issues better than in the past
- People that were not involved in 1996 plan don't pay attention to plan
- How many more parking lots do we need?
- Focus on youth and activities
- Downtown needs a kitchen store, music store, bath store, and a pottery store
- Big Rapids businesses doing better than Michigan as-a-whole
- I love this place
- Development and support of the arts
- Need a pedestrian bridge by FSU campus
- Currently transitioning from student housing in town to apartments
- The sky is the limit
- BR one of the crown jewels of the north

April 30, 2008 Public Participation Workshop

Introduction – The Big Rapids Planning Commission held the first of two public participation workshops on April 30, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at Big Rapids City Hall. There was broad notice of the meeting that included newspaper articles and advertisements, television and radio coverage, discussion at public meetings, and yard signs notifying people of the meeting. The intent of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for area residents to participate at the very beginning of the one-year planning process. The Planning Commission sought residents' views on what people feel are the City's strengths and weaknesses – in order to guide the Planning Commission during the update of the Master Plan.

Participants – The following people participated in the two-hour workshop:

- Angel Ackley
- Marty Aldrich
- Rickey Aldrich
- Lynn Anderson
- Impellizzen Appol
- Nancy Baldwin
- Dave Bee (facilitator)
- Andrew Bohren
- Diana Byrne
- Frederic D. Byrne
- Mary Jane Cook (Planning Commission)
- Bobby Fisher
- Jeannene Frank
- Jack Fraser
- Dennis Gaymer
- Tony Gaglio
- Mark Gifford (City Staff)
- Dick Hansen
- Joe Harper
- Terry Harper (City Commission)
- Virginia Kienitz
- Carol Larimer (Planning Commission)
- Marlies Manning
- Samantha Marshall
- Kanin McKean
- Ron McKean
- William R. Mrdeza
- Beth Pacholka
- Brian Pacholka (Planning Commission)
- Bryan Ridenour
- Scott Roman
- Mary Ryan
- Lynne Scheible (facilitator)
- Marilyn Schippa
- Donna Schmidt
- John Schmidt
- David Schut
- Steve Sobers (City Staff)
- Bill Simpson (Planning Commission)
- Betty VanAlstine
- Mark Warba (Mayor)
- Don Wedcheski

The Process – Several members of the planning team provided the participants with a description of the evening's events, and a summary of the ongoing planning process, and the reasons for performing a Master Plan.

After random assignment to six small groups, individuals were asked to spend a few minutes reflecting on what they feel are the City's strengths and weaknesses. Each of the six small groups then developed a list of the top five strengths and weaknesses and wrote them on large sheets of paper. Members of the Planning Team moved between each of the groups to keep them on track and answer any questions about the process. After each of the groups was satisfied with their lists, they presented their results to the overall group and answered any questions. Once everyone was comfortable with the two lists, each individual "voted" on what they felt are Big Rapids' top three strengths and top three weaknesses (using green stickers for the strengths and red stickers for the weaknesses).

The Results – The following identifies a summary of the strengths and weaknesses as identified by the overall group, the six small groups, and each of the workshop's participants.

The following 11 strengths are shown in ranked order (there are several ties).

1. Ferris State University (FSU) (22 votes) – The University plays a large role in the identity of the City and surrounding area. Some of FSU's key assets include its student population, providing a wide range of employment opportunities, lifetime learning opportunities, cultural and sporting events, diversifying the area's population, financial support, and the many students that choose to stay in Big Rapids after graduation.
2. Small Town Character (22 votes) – Workshop participants listed Big Rapids' small size and small town character as a major benefit of the community – combined with a full range of infrastructure, amenities, and services. While the University is a major presence, the City is family-oriented and is considered very "walkable" due to its size, the proximity of the downtown and public facilities to residential areas, and the network of sidewalks and trails.
3. Natural Resources (12 votes) – The Big Rapids Area (including areas outside of the City) has a variety of natural resources that add to the character of the community and the overall quality of life. The Muskegon River, which runs through Big Rapids, provides many opportunities for recreation and is a key part of the Community's identity. Big Rapids is surrounded by many natural resources including Manistee National Forest, Pere Marquette State Forest, Haymarsh State Game Area, and many others that provide opportunities for fishing, hunting, camping, and other outdoor activities.
4. Roben Hood Airport (9 votes) – Workshop participants felt the local airport is a major asset that creates a regional transportation hub, provides opportunities for recreational flying, generates revenues through fuel sales, and provides other benefits including Aero-Med.
5. Parks and Recreation (9 votes) – The City of Big Rapids has many parks and a network of trails including the City's Riverwalk and Michigan's White Pine Trail, which begins in Grand Rapids and goes all the way to Cadillac. This strength is closely related to natural resources, but is separate since it includes built facilities that are maintained by the City and other government units (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Mecosta County, etc.).
6. Economic Opportunities (6 votes) – Participants listed many economic benefits in the area, both related to programs and features such as the City's location – as well as amenities such as US-131 and the airport. The local economy has a diverse range of jobs including education, manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and government.
7. Local Schools (6 votes) – The quality of the area's schools and the choices available to parents was cited as a strength. The area has public, private, and charter school opportunities. The smaller size of schools, academic excellence, availability of programs, and the school facilities were all listed as individual assets of the area's schools. Additionally, Ferris State University is available (see above).
8. Cultural Opportunities (5 votes) – In addition to the many cultural opportunities related to FSU, the City also has a variety of other opportunities such as Artworks, Voca Lyrica, Stage M, and Festival of the Arts.
9. People (5 votes) – Participants identified the open and giving nature of the City's residents as an asset. Big Rapids is willing to embrace new people and ideas.

Participants also believed the schools and churches are accessible and inviting

10. Mecosta County Medical Center (6 votes) – The Hospital is a major community asset that provides health care and employment opportunities to those in and around Big Rapids. The hospital provides a wide range of quality services and the facility's location is very central and convenient to residents and students.
11. Big Rapids Community Library (4 votes) – The Community Library is an asset that provides free access to books and other materials, provides a variety of programs, and is a community gathering place.

The following 11 weaknesses are shown in ranked order (there are several ties).

1. Condition of Housing (19 votes) – Participants thought the overall condition of housing in Big Rapids needs improved. There is a high percentage of rental housing to serve the needs of FSU students, some of which is not adequately maintained by the students and/or the landlords. While there are many excellent landlords in Big Rapids, there are others that do not maintain their properties in a manner that enhances the surrounding housing units, the neighborhoods, or the overall community. The demand for student housing has also impacted the ability of the community to adequately focus on historic preservation, since many of the area's historic single family homes serve as multiple family rental units.
2. Tax Structure (14 votes) – Workshop participants considered that the large percentage of tax-exempt property in the City (over 60 percent of land within the City is tax exempt) creates a burden for the remaining property owners. There is a high percentage of tax exempt land due to the location of public facilities that are listed as strengths, such as FSU, Mecosta County Medical Center, Mecosta County facilities, and other tax exempt properties. Due to the large proportion of tax exempt land, the City has an income tax and higher property taxes in order to provide the services that residents and businesses value.
3. Recreation Opportunities (14 votes) – Participants felt there are not adequate recreational and entertainment opportunities available for a broad range of age groups. There are limited outdoor opportunities, especially during the winter. The City also lacks a community center and youth-oriented activities such as a skateboard park.
4. Public Infrastructure (13 votes) – The City of Big Rapids maintains a wide range of infrastructure that includes a complete transportation network (streets, sidewalks, etc.), a wastewater treatment plant, a water distribution system, parks, public buildings, etc. Much of the system is at or near capacity and the system is also aging and in need of updating or replacement. Funds to maintain the infrastructure necessary to provide the existing level of services and promote a comfortable level of growth are difficult to acquire without the support of the community and the cooperation of surrounding communities.
5. Business Development and Support of Local Businesses (11 votes) – Workshop participants believed there is a lack of adequate business development needed to bring more people into the area and keep people in the area (both in the long-run and keeping students in the area over weekends). Participants feel extended hours are need in downtown businesses and there should be more local support of programs to

encourage businesses, such as a more streamlined approach to permits such as liquor licenses.

6. Neighborhood Grocery Store Needed (8 votes) – Unlike many of the weaknesses identified during the workshop, this weakness is very specific, relating to a particular type of private business. There are limited opportunities to shop for groceries in neighborhood shops. Principle grocery opportunities are limited to the large grocery stores outside of the downtown area. This is closely tied to Business Development (see above).
7. Local Economy (8 votes) – Workshop participants feel the area suffers from low wages and lack of adequate employment opportunities. The industrial base continues to decline in Big Rapids and nationally. This weakness is also closely related to Business Development (see above).
8. Cooperation with Surrounding Townships (7 votes) – The long-time relationship between the City of Big Rapids and the surrounding townships has been a source of tension and has limited the ability of the area to grow and develop in an orderly and sensible manner. The City of Big Rapids has limited areas for future development and development outside of the City competes with older residential and commercial areas within the City.
9. Transportation (7 votes) – Traffic in many areas of Big Rapids was cited as a weakness, along with east-west access across the Region (M-20). Many of the high traffic areas in Big Rapids are due to the fact that there is one primary north-south route through town and there are many congestion points such as the intersection of State and Perry, or M-20 and State Street. Additionally, the Muskegon River limits access.
10. Relationship with FSU (4 votes) – Some participants feel that the relationship between the City of Big Rapids and FSU is not as good as it could be. The University's faculty and students are not integrated into the community in a productive manner (many faculty members live outside of the City and many students leave on weekends and move away after graduation).
11. Division within Big Rapids (3 votes) – Some participants feel there are divisions within Big Rapids neighborhoods. One particular area includes the conflicts between east-side and west-side residents and businesses.

May 28, 2008 Public Participation Workshop

Introduction – The Big Rapids Planning Commission held the second of two public participation workshops on May 28, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at Big Rapids City Hall. There was broad notice of the meeting that included newspaper articles and advertisements, television and radio coverage, discussion at public meetings, and yard signs notifying people of the meeting. The intent of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for area residents to participate at the very beginning of the one-year planning process. The Planning Commission sought residents' views on what people feel are the City's strengths and weaknesses – in order to guide the Planning Commission during the update of the Master Plan.

Participants – The following people participated in the two-hour workshop:

- Amanda Abrahamsa (FSU)
- C. Adams (FSU)
- Dave Bee (facilitator)
- Sean Doughty (FSU)
- Mark Gifford (City Staff)
- Lou Ann Gregory
- Diane Griffin
- Rick Griffin (FSU Professor)
- Pat Heeter
- Lori Henderson (FSU)
- John Holdsworth
- Aaron Jones
- Kevin Lin (FSU)
- Joseph Lounsbury (FSU)
- Samantha Lytle (FSU)
- Callie Mackie
- Denise Mitten
- Brian Pacholka (Planning Commission)
- Joe Panek (FSU)
- Alissa Rader (FSU)
- Andrew Radtke (FSU)
- Shirryl Sanger
- Lynne Scheible (facilitator)
- Julius Suchy (City Staff)
- Steve Sobers (City Staff)

One of the key differences between this workshop and the first workshop held one month earlier is the large presence of college students. One of the University's Political Science classes attended the workshop and actively participated in identifying the strengths and weaknesses.

The Process – Several members of the planning team provided the participants with a description of the evening's events, and a summary of the ongoing planning process, and the reasons for performing a Master Plan.

After random assignment to three small groups, individuals were asked to spend a few minutes reflecting on what they feel are the City's strengths and weaknesses. Each of the small groups then developed a list of the top five strengths and weaknesses and wrote them on large sheets of paper. Members of the Planning Team moved between each of the groups to keep them on track and answer any questions about the process. After each of the groups was satisfied with their lists, they presented their results to the overall group and answered any questions. Once everyone was comfortable with the two lists, each individual "voted" on what they felt are Big Rapids' top three strengths and top three weaknesses (using green stickers for the strengths and red stickers for the weaknesses).

The Results – The following identifies a summary of the strengths and weaknesses as identified by the overall group, the three small groups, and each of the workshop's participants.

The following seven strengths are shown in ranked order (there is one tie).

1. Safe Community (17 votes) – Workshop participants listed the presence of the City's police (including bicycle and horse patrols), fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) as a major strength of Big Rapids. Participants feel safe walking around Big Rapids and the Ferris State University (FSU) Campus. Also listed in this category is the presence of the Mecosta County Medical Center.

2. Positive Educational Environment (14 votes) – Participants identified both the K-12 system and the presences of Ferris State University as a major strength of the City. Residents have a choice of where to educate their children – public schools, private schools, and a charter school are all located in the City. Participants listed a variety of strengths related to Ferris, such as bringing diversity to the area, the positive economic impact of the University, the presence of cultural and arts-oriented activities, and the fact that both students and faculty bring a lot of knowledge to the area. The participants also identified Ferris as an organization that supports the Big Rapids Area.
3. Parks and Recreation (13 votes) – Workshop participants identified the City's parks and recreation system as a major strength of community. People listed the well maintained parks, and many other attractions and activities such as tourism, fishing, sports, community classes, tubing, Artworks, dance, and the band shelter.
4. Outreach Programs (7 votes) – Participants listed the many outreach programs in the area as a strength. Human services such as the early childhood program, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and Relay for Life were all cited as positives.
5. Local Products (7 votes) – Workshop participants cited the availability of local products as a strength. Amish goods and services, the Big Rapids Farmers Market, and Meijer's program promoting the use of local food products were all listed as local assets. The strength of the Downtown is closely related since it is primarily occupied by local merchants that specialize in customer service.
6. Community Recycling (2 votes) – Participants appreciate the City's recycling program and look forward to the planned improvements.
7. Community Environment (1 vote) – While this category received only vote, the previous six categories all support the overall community environment of a small town feel with big town opportunities.

The following nine weaknesses are shown in ranked order (there is one tie).

1. Lack of Entertainment (16 votes) – Participants identified the lack of quality, affordable activities for a variety of interests and age groups as the biggest weakness in Big Rapids. Lack of activities for teens, young families, and children were all listed. Lack of night life and variety of restaurants (especially Sunday evenings) was also identified by the group. Teens seemed to be a high priority within this category, with the lack of mentoring, internships, and programs promoting self-support identified as issues.
2. Brain Drain (15 votes) – Workshop participants listed the loss of students from the area after graduation from FSU as a major weakness. There is the perception that there are limited opportunities for people that stay in Big Rapids, including lack of jobs and other quality of life issues. The lack of places to make (employment) and spend money received two votes and is included in this category.
3. Public Improvements (14 votes) – Participants feel there is a need to improve a variety of public programs and facilities. The City's recycling program needs updated, water conservation needs to be promoted, upkeep of streets and public buildings needs improved, and the public library needs updated – were all listed by participants as desired. The lack of Riverfront development (other than parks) and

water safety were also cited.

4. Student and Community Relations (5 votes) – Conflicts between students, residents, and other local organizations were cited as weaknesses by several participants. It was also felt by some that access to healthcare was not as good for students as residents.
5. Student-Based Community Information (4 votes) – Workshop participants identified the lack of an adequate central source of community information (especially for FSU students) as a weakness. People felt that a central website, with links to other community-based websites would be helpful for indoctrinating new students to life in Big Rapids.
6. Deteriorating Housing (3 votes) – Several participants listed the condition of housing within Big Rapids as an issue, with no opportunities to live in new residential units within the City.
7. Inadequate Use of FSU (2 votes) – Some participants identified the issue of the City not using Ferris' resources as completely as possible as a weakness.
8. Adult Vocational Training (1 vote) – One participant felt that opportunities for adult vocational training is not adequate in Big Rapids.
9. Traffic flow and the lack of businesses related to tourism and recreation were also both listed as weaknesses, but did not receive any votes.

Focus Groups

The planning process included holding 13 focus group sessions with a variety of organizations and interests. The focus groups included:

- Mecosta Osceola Career Marketing Class (two separate classes with 30 total participants)
- Career Center (two separate classes of children)
- Ferris State University Students (15 participants)
- Good Neighbors Association (16 participants including two from townships)
- Big Rapids Housing Commission – Nisbett Building (23 participants)
- Big Rapids Jaycees (20 participants)
- Big Rapids Lions Club (20 participants)
- Mecosta County Community Foundation (15 participants)
- Parkview Housing (6 participants)
- Big Rapids Property Owners Association (15 participants)
- Big Rapids Township Officials (Interview with Township Supervisor and Administrative Assistant and a separate interview with Supervisor)

Each of the focus groups was asked to identify Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats. While each group had a different take on each of the four categories, many similar themes emerged during the process. A summary of each group's results follows.

Mecosta Osceola Career Marketing Classes

Strengths – Strengths included many of the retail stores and services in the City and surrounding township. Healthcare was also listed, as was Ferris State University (FSU), the U.S. Post Office, the Career Center, Hemlock Park, and the County Fair.

Challenges – Challenges included the City's boundaries (landlocked), lack of opportunities (especially for teenagers), restaurants limited to major chains, age and vacancy rates of commercial buildings, lack of shopping and entertainment opportunities, lack of employment opportunities, and pedestrian traffic at FSU.

Opportunities – Opportunities included FSU, the need for a skate park, the need for more manufacturing, employment, and a mall.

Threats – These included natural disasters, gas prices, and lack of jobs.

Career Center

Strengths – Strengths included many of the retail stores and services in the City and surrounding township. "Walkability" was also listed, along with the Muskegon River, and the Pioneer Printing Press. Entertainment was also mentioned – specifically concerts and the FSU Ice Arena.

Challenges – Challenges included the condition of the roads, lack of entertainment, lack of jobs for FSU students, and lack of jobs for teens.

Opportunities – Opportunities included the need for more things for teens to do – such as a mall, an arcade, paintball, and a skate-park.

Threats – Large retailers impact on smaller businesses, the economy, the price of gas, and too much growth were all identified as threats.

FSU Students

Strengths – Strengths included the Riverwalk and the Muskegon River, the Downtown, the local shops, student groups, the Pioneer Paper, the Department of Public Safety, and Big Rapids' small town character.

Challenges – Students offered a long list of challenges. Issues listed included litter in the downtown and retail areas, lack of ethnic diversity, inadequate recycling, quality of off-campus housing is poor, lack of marketing for local events, enforcement too focused on students (noise, parking, garbage), lack of sidewalks outside of City, inadequate communication between Township and City, elected officials not student-friendly, condition of roads, "Greek" life not supported by zoning, downtown storefronts not appealing, and lack of employment opportunities.

Opportunities – Opportunities included encouraging student involvement, better zoning (related to student housing, better marketing of area, more cultural diversity in restaurants, and "Bulldog Bonanza."

Threats – Increased cost of living, people leaving Michigan, and increasing tuition were all identified as threats.

Good Neighbors Association

Strengths – Strengths included historic homes, the Riverwalk and Muskegon River, museums, walkability, trees, FSU, Mecosta County Medical Center, schools, churches, library, neighborhoods, recycling options, physical setting, parks, shopping, people, industrial park, Roben Hood Airport, Farmers Market, and Downtown.

Challenges – The Association offered a variety of challenges including taxes, inadequate manufacturing, downtown, parking at U.S. Post Office, relationship with FSU, high percentage of tax exempt land, poverty, intergovernmental relationships, pedestrian/bicycling safety, keeping students after graduation, maintaining housing, condition of roads, trash and litter enforcement, infrastructure issues, lack of a downtown grocery, and other enforcement issues.

Opportunities – Opportunities included more regional cooperation, more involvement with FSU, market community as a retirement area; capitalize on talented residents and students, and seeking grants.

Threats – The group listed growth north of town as a threat (18-19 Mile Road area), the economy, energy costs, food costs, and aging population as threats.

Big Rapids Housing Commission – Nisbett Building

Strengths – Strengths included college town/young people, DART, local activities, bicycling, Artworks, parks, Farmers Market, shopping opportunities, and the community library.

Challenges – The Commission offered a variety of challenges such as improving the downtown, the control of noise, the quality of housing, traffic lights and speeding, lack of sidewalks outside of City, snow removal, marketing, and improved public transit.

Opportunities – The primary opportunity was more involvement with FSU.

Threats – The group listed keeping the Muskegon River clean.

Big Rapids Jaycees

Strengths – Strengths included that Big Rapids is a great place to raise a family, the Riverwalk, the Muskegon River, diversity of employment, college sports, small town qualities, downtown, variety of shopping, local history, affordable, good schools, and the many community-based organizations.

Challenges – Challenges included the misconception that there is nothing to do, the lack of family-oriented recreation like a YMCA, lack of youth programs, the economy, housing, diversity, vacant buildings, roads, the need to support local businesses, and lack of business diversity.

Opportunities – The group identified the City’s location in Michigan as an opportunity – along with FSU, parks, and room for growth.

Threats – The group listed keeping money in Big Rapids, the lack of employment, environmental issues, and the economy as threats.

Big Rapids Lions Club

Strengths – Strengths included FSU, good labor market, location, recreation opportunities, the Muskegon River, Roben Hood Airport, Mecosta County Medical Center, downtown, location of county seat, Library, and small town character.

Challenges – Challenges included lack of tax base, vacant buildings, lack of funding for infrastructure, lack of high-tech jobs, traffic (bridge and signal timing), lack of adequate east-west state route, lack of year-round community center.

Opportunities – The group identified the expansion of industry, more FSU students, downtown growth, recreation, the Muskegon River, and increased intergovernmental cooperation as opportunities.

Threats – The group listed the economy, the relationship with the Township, lack of employment, traffic, lack of funding, and housing vacancies as threats.

Mecosta County Community Foundation

Strengths – Strengths included a vibrant downtown, FSU, Riverwalk, Library, Historical apartments, Mecosta County Medical Center, small town character, sporting events, and recreation.

Challenges – Challenges included cooperation with surrounding townships, the economy, the City’s budget, Ryan Creek, and the percentage of tax exempt properties in the City.

Opportunities – The group identified increased cooperation between the City and FSU as an opportunity, along with recreation opportunities, Roben Hood Airport, proximity to Canadian Lakes, festivals, and overall quality of life.

Threats – The group listed the expansion of big box stores, the economy, the enrollment levels of FSU, State Government, dependence on manufacturing, and the hidden costs associated with substance abuse and unemployment.

Parkview Housing

Strengths – The group identified a variety of strengths including schools, parks, the rehabilitation of homes, friendly people, local leadership, small town attributes, FSU, walkability, and transit.

Challenges – Challenges included relationship with FSU, lack of a grocery store on the east side of the river, cost/availability of transit, library, too much growth, housing, lack of teen activities, traffic (including pedestrians)

Big Rapids Property Owners Association

Strengths – Strengths identified by the group include the County Seat, FSU, Riverwalk, Farmers Market, associations, arts and culture, small town attributes, the Downtown and other retail areas, and the area's recreation opportunities.

Challenges – Challenges included the relationship between the City and landlords, what to do with the Library, rezoning without consulting community, lack of students spending money locally, lack of a downtown grocery store, lack of cooperation between City and students, and taxes versus services balance.

Opportunities – The group identified increasing fuel costs as an opportunity – since more people will stay in the area.

Threats – The group listed the fuel prices, the economy, housing costs, and the increasing cost of providing government services.

Big Rapids Township Officials

Strengths – Strengths identified included the historic apartments for seniors, the downtown, parks, trees along sidewalks, walkability, Farmers Market, public utilities, housing, FSU, Mecosta County Medical Center, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Challenges – Challenges included the upcoming Census, renovation of the housing stock, high taxes, street and sidewalk maintenance, and some of the outlying retail areas.

Opportunities – The group identified the viability of the downtown, renovating housing, parks, and the Depot as opportunities.

Threats – The group listed the economy and its many side effects such as loss of jobs and viability of downtown.

Summary of Focus Groups

While each group focused on issues that they are most familiar with, several themes exist throughout the groups.

Strengths include the small town attributes of Big Rapids (size walkability, etc.), the many parks, the downtown and other shopping areas, the location of the County seat in town, the area's people, Ferris State University, Mecosta County Medical Center, and a variety of public attributes such as Roben Hood Airport, schools, and the Library.

Challenges include housing issues, the need for more cooperation with FSU, condition of roads, the ability to fund services and improvements, the downtown, the lack of a grocery store, lack of teen activities, and keeping students in town after they graduate.

Opportunities include the many public facilities, FSU, parks and recreation, and the City's location.

Threats seemed to focus on the economy and fuel costs.

Community Survey

The Master Plan Working Committee began discussing how to perform a community survey early in the planning process. The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission developed several drafts of surveys and the City considered several options for performing a community survey. After several meetings the City decided to work with students from Ferris State University that used the opportunity as a Market Research Project. Professor Laura Farlow Dix, Ph.D, coordinated the effort and led the students through the process.

The 91 question survey was mailed to 1,000 households in October 2008. Over the next month the survey team received 222 usable surveys for a very respectable response rate of 22 percent. The students gathered surveys, tabulated the results, analyzed the results, prepared a comprehensive document, and presented the information to the City on January 15, 2009. The following information is the summary prepared by the students:

Demographics

- 24 percent of respondents live in Precinct #4 (see map)
- 22 percent of respondents were age 65-84
- 39 percent of respondents have lived in Big Rapids 20+ years
- 43 percent of respondents plan to live in Big Rapids 20+ years
- 61 percent of respondents live in single family residences
- 62 percent of respondents own their homes

Community Features – City Features

- Respondents are most satisfied with Big Rapids' small town character and Ferris State University
- Precincts 3, 4, and 5 are most satisfied with quality of life
- Respondents over 45 rated small town character, quality of life, Ferris State University, and local leadership higher
- Respondents living in Big Rapids 10-14 years are more satisfied with Big Rapids' small town character
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids over ten years are more satisfied with small town character, quality of life, and local leadership
- Respondents owning their homes are more satisfied with small town character, local costs of living, and quality of life

Community Features – City Infrastructure

- Respondents are more satisfied with public services and variety of available housing
- Respondents are least satisfied with condition of streets and traffic flow
- Respondents are dissatisfied with condition of sidewalks in Precinct #5
- Older respondents are more satisfied with public services, variety of available housing, and traffic flow
- Respondents new to Big Rapids are more satisfied with public services and condition of streets
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids more than five years are more satisfied with public services
- Respondents owning their homes are more satisfied with public services than renters

Community Features – Local Opportunities

- Respondents are most satisfied with the downtown business area
- Older respondents are more satisfied with shopping, employment, recreation and entertainment opportunities
- Respondents living in Big Rapids 1-4 years are least satisfied with shopping, employment, recreational, and entertainment opportunities
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids over 5 years are more satisfied with shopping opportunities, over 15 years are more satisfied with employment opportunities, and over ten years are more satisfied with recreation and entertainment opportunities
- Respondents owning their homes are more satisfied with employment opportunities than renters

Future Direction – Residential

- Respondents rated preservation/improvement of residential areas highest
- Older respondents are more likely to agree homeownership should be encouraged
- Respondents living in Big Rapids 1-4 years are least likely to support homeownership while those living in Big Rapids 10-14 and 20+ years do not support apartment development
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids longer are more likely to agree homeownership should be encouraged
- Homeowners support homeownership and preservation of residential area programs while renters would like more single family housing and apartments
- Respondents in mobile homes and apartment would like more single family housing

Future Direction – Commercial and Industrial

- Respondents would like to see industrial areas concentrated
- Respondents 45-54 are least likely to want downtown expansion
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids 5-9 years do not want the Downtown business area expanded
- Renters rate expanding downtown and commercial development higher
- Respondents in single family residences are less likely to want the downtown expanded

Future Direction – Other

- Respondents agree Ferris State University and the hospital are key to the city's future
- Respondents over 65 rated county facilities and hospital higher while those aged 18-24 rated city park development higher
- The longer respondents lived in Big Rapids the less they want more city park development
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids less than five years rated county facilities and hospital lower
- Renters rated city park development higher than owners
- Respondents in multiple family housing rate city park development higher
- 28 percent of respondents would prefer a farmers market in the space across from City Hall

Facilities/Services – Emergency Services

- Respondents rated fire protection services highest
- Older respondents rated all emergency services higher than younger respondents
- Respondents living in Big Rapids less than five years rated all emergency services lower
- Owners rated all emergency services higher than renters
- Respondents living in mobile homes rated emergency 911, ambulance, Mecosta County Medical Center, and Fire Protection higher

Facilities/Services – City Services

- Respondents rated trash removal highest
- Ratings of Street Maintenance, trash removal, recycling, and water/sewer services tend to increase with age expect for 25-34 year olds
- Respondents living in Big Rapids 1-4 years rated trash removal, recycling, and water/sewer services lower than all other age groups
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids less than 5 years rated recycling and water/sewer services lower
- Owners rated trash removal, recycling, and water/sewer services higher than renters
- Respondents in Apartments and duplex homes rated trash removal and recycling services lower

Facilities/Services – City Facilities

- Respondents rated City Parks and Recreation highest
- Respondents living and planning to live in Big Rapids less than five years rated Roben Hood Airport, private and public schools lower
- Homeowners rated Roben Hood Airport higher than renters

Public Funding – City Facilities

- 80 percent of Respondents feel the Community Library should be funded
- 59 percent of 18-24 year olds support funding community festivals
- Respondents living in Big Rapids less than one year support funding a community center and community festivals

- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids over ten years are least likely to support a community center
- Renters are more supportive of funding a community center and festivals
- Respondents in single family residences are least likely to fund community festivals

Public Funding – City Programs

- 44 percent of respondents feel neighborhood revitalization should be funded
- Respondents 18-34 are more supportive of funding downtown development and neighborhood revitalization
- Respondents living in Big Rapids less than ten years are more likely to support downtown development and neighborhood revitalization
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids less than 5 years are more likely to support neighborhood revitalization
- Renters are more likely to support funding of Downtown development and neighborhood revitalization

Public Funding – Recreation Facilities

- 72 percent of respondents feel the riverwalk should be funded
- Respondents in precincts #4 & #5 are more likely to support the playscape
- Respondents living in Big Rapids 10-14 years are more likely to support the park band shell while those living in Big Rapids 20+ years are least likely to support a skatepark and riverwalk
- Respondents planning to live in Big Rapids 5-14 years and 20+ years are more likely to support funding the park band shell while those less than 1 year are more supporting of the riverwalk
- Owners are more likely to support funding the park band shell while renters are more likely to support funding a skatepark
- Respondents living in mobile homes are more likely to support funding of the playscape

Activities – Recreational Involvement

- 42 percent of respondents occasionally walk in Big Rapids
- 37 percent of respondents occasionally bicycle and 33 percent never bicycle in Big Rapids
- 47 percent of respondents occasionally and 38.5 percent monthly visit a city park
- 44 percent of respondents occasionally and 28.1 percent never visit the library

Activities – City Involvement

- 59 percent of respondents never attend a community meeting
- 52 percent of respondents occasionally and 35 percent never interact with a public safety officer
- 42 percent of respondents occasionally and 41 percent never interact with City staff

Activities – Shopping

- 42 percent of Respondents occasionally and 39 percent monthly shop Downtown
- 50 percent of respondents monthly and 36 percent daily shop Perry Avenue
- 51 percent of respondents occasionally and 30 percent monthly shop Northland drive
- 45 percent of respondents never and 38 percent occasionally shop the East side

Activities – Dining

- 42 percent of respondents never eat on the East side while 43 percent occasionally do
- Roughly 80 percent of respondents eat out occasionally or monthly in the other areas

Community Survey – Summary of Information Related to Future Land Use

In addition to the analysis performed by the Ferris State University Students, shown in the above summary, it is important to determine how respondents feel about future development in the City of Big Rapids.

Residential

Respondents want to see existing residential areas preserved and enhanced. Encouraging homeownership is one action step that is identified by survey respondents. Developing a Historic District is another action step preferred by respondents. Respondents want to see additional single family housing developed, but are not overwhelmingly in favor of additional development. A smaller number of respondents are in favor of developing additional multiple-family units.

Commercial and Industrial

Most respondents favor expanding commercial uses adjacent to existing commercial areas and almost as many favor developing new commercial areas. Additionally, the majority of respondents favor expanding and improving the downtown.

Most respondents want to see industrial uses concentrated around existing manufacturing-related areas. Less than half of the respondents want to see industry allowed outside of existing industrial areas.

Public and Quasi Public Development

An overwhelming majority of respondents recognize that Ferris State University is key to the future of Big Rapids. Nearly as many feel that Mecosta County Medical Center is also key to the City's future. The majority of respondents also recognize the importance of the Mecosta County facilities located in Big Rapids (which is the County Seat). A very weak majority of respondents desire additional City park development. Finally, most respondents feel that land use should be guided to reduce conflicts.

ISSUES, GOALS, AND ACTION PLAN

The following identifies the issues, goals, and actions that will be taken to guide the City of Big Rapids towards its vision described at the beginning of the plan. Many of the actions identified under one goal appear under other goals since there are many related issues, goals, and actions linked to the City's preferred future. Additionally, each action is placed in one of three categories: Short-Term Actions (2010-2011), Medium-Term Actions/Ongoing Actions (2012-2015), and Long-Term/Ongoing Actions (2016-2020).

To allow the Planning Commission to follow each action throughout the life of this plan, the following administrative actions are recommended to ensure that actions are followed or modified to address changes that may occur during the life of the Master Plan:

1. At the first regularly scheduled meeting of the calendar year, the Planning Commission will review each of the actions identified in the appropriate time periods (Short, Medium, and Long-Term Actions) to determine if the actions were adequately addressed in the previous year.
2. The Planning Commission Chair will maintain a list of comments for each Action during the life of the Master Plan. The Chair may delegate this task to City Staff. The comments for each year will be made in the boxes under each action. Comments made at the first meeting of each calendar year will be made in the box dated for the previous year. For example, comments made at the January 2011 meeting will be noted in the 2010 box for each action. If additional space is required for any comments, the Chair should make a note that additional comments are attached.
3. If the Planning Commission feels an action was not adequately addressed, it will determine the best way to ensure that it is addressed in the following 12-month review period. The Planning Commission can assign individuals and/or organizations to address actions, and can form committees to address issues in greater detail. An example is the creation of community-based design teams to assist in creating goals for specific areas of Big Rapids.
4. If the Planning Commission feels an action has been adequately addressed, the action can be removed from the list of actions, or modified to further the planning process.
5. The Chair of the Planning Commission can also assign members of the Planning Commission with specific actions to track during each 12-month review period.

Population

Issue – A declining population creates challenges in a community related to decreased revenues, the ability to provide an efficient level of services and utilities, the inability to best utilize the built environment, the influence on the public school system and many other challenges related to excess capacity and reduced revenues.

Assets – There are an unlimited number of assets that Big Rapids can build on in order to address the issue of a declining or stagnant population. The City's overall quality of life, the location of Ferris State University, the existing infrastructure and services provided by the community, the area's recreation opportunities, the City's location and proximity

to US-131, Mecosta County Medical Center, the area's diverse economy, Roben Hood Airport, Big Rapids' downtown, the area's natural features, and many other assets are in-place and should all be emphasized when working to attract people and businesses to the area.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards creating a steady increase in population by providing a range of opportunities within the City that are important to attracting a diverse population that includes family households, senior citizens, college students, and others.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since growth is essential if the City is going to be able to adequately address many of the other goals established in the plan. Housing cannot improve if there is no demand for more and improved housing, the economy cannot grow if there is not a ready supply of workers, improvements to the transportation network cannot be made if the demand is not present, the downtown cannot be improved if the population is not great enough to support improvements, and facilities and services cannot be maintained without maintaining the population to support funding the facilities and services. Of course a balance rate of growth is necessary to ensure that Big Rapids does not lose its small town character. The particular goal of population growth did not emerge as a major need of the community during the public participation phase of the planning process, but growth (or at least maintaining the existing population) is necessary if the City wants to be able to sustain (or improve) its current quality of life that depends on providing residents and businesses with an adequate level of affordable services and facilities.

Actions

The following actions, related to promoting population growth, are intentionally broad and are not listed as short, medium, or long-term actions since they are addressed in other Goals (listed below). Notations describe the location of additional details.

1. The City will work to expand housing opportunities for all types of households – including family households, senior housing, and student accommodations. See Goal and Actions related to Housing.
2. The City will work to maintain and improve its residential areas by enforcing regulations and working with homeowners to identify and rectify issues. See Goal and Actions related to Housing.
3. The City will promote its many strengths to attract residents and businesses to the City by placing advertisements in select publications. See Goal and Actions related to Economic Development.
4. The City will work with the U.S. Census Bureau to ensure a complete count of residents occurs during the 2010 U.S. Census of Population. See Goal and Actions related to Public Facilities and Services.
5. The City will strive to maintain a high level of public services valued by existing residents and businesses – and sought by potential residents and businesses. See Goal and Actions related to Public Facilities and Services.

6. The City of Big Rapids will work with the Public and Private Schools to promote the area's schools to potential families. See Goals and Actions related to Public Facilities and Services, and Economic Development.
7. Work with the surrounding townships to promote area-wide growth and maintain the ability to discuss the transfer of land from one governmental unit to another if the outcome is positive and desired by all involved residents and units. See Goal and Actions related to Cooperation and Coordination.

Housing

Issue – The quality, condition, and variety of housing is an issue related to a many factors such as a high percentage of rental housing units, student-oriented housing, foreclosures, lack of housing for families and professionals, poverty, and the inability to afford maintenance and upgrades.

Assets – The City has a diverse mixture of housing located in traditional neighborhood settings that are convenient to shopping, schools, parks, and other community features. There are many organizations devoted to strengthening the City's neighborhoods and housing stock.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards creating a balanced range of housing opportunities that includes well-maintained single family homes, multiple family units, and other types of housing.

Housing is included as a goal of the Master Plan since it frequently ranked as one of the top issues in the public participation phase of the planning process. Key person interviews, both workshops, many of the focus groups, and the community survey all cite housing as a key issue that needs to be addressed.

Short-Term Actions (2010-2011)

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, City Staff, and the Housing Commission to expand housing opportunities for all types of households by defining areas appropriate for housing development in the Master Plan and making any necessary amendments to the Zoning Ordinance that encourage quality development or redevelopment of housing. This would include housing to accommodate the needs of families, senior citizens, students, professional, and others to allow for a varied population in the City. Encourage a broad range of housing values to ensure success.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City staff to identify capital improvements (such as streets, water, and sewer) needed to expand housing opportunities in Big Rapids and to include such improvements in the City's Capital Improvements Program. City staff will seek appropriate grants, loans, and other funding sources to develop and maintain necessary improvements.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

2. City staff will ensure that inadequate maintenance of housing does not detract from neighborhoods by enforcing regulations and provide residents with an easy and effective method for reporting violations such as parking issues, noise, over-occupied housing units, and maintenance issues.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

3. The Planning Commission and City Staff will explore the possibility of creating a land bank (similar to the program initiated in Genesee County to address the housing issues in Flint) to ensure that vacant housing and the current foreclosure issues across the country do not negatively impact Big Rapids' neighborhoods.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

4. Through planning and zoning, the Planning Commission will promote small housing developments and encourage developers to include an acceptable level of amenities (such as basements and garages) while at the same time encouraging the development of smaller, more affordable and sustainable housing.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

5. The Planning Commission, City Commission, Housing Commission, and City Staff will determine the feasibility of implementing a variety of incentive programs, such as Neighborhood Enterprise Zones, to encourage property owners to invest in the long-term success of the City's neighborhoods and residential areas.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

6. The Planning Commission, City Commission, Housing Commission, and City Staff will encourage sustainable homeownership by maintaining information describing public programs designed to assist potential and existing homeowners.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

Medium-Term/Ongoing Actions (2012-2015)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Short-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2012 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, City Staff, and the Housing Commission to expand housing opportunities for all types of households by defining areas appropriate for housing development in the Master Plan and making any necessary amendments to the Zoning Ordinance that encourage quality development or redevelopment of housing. This would include housing to accommodate the needs of families, senior citizens, students, professional, and others to allow for a varied population in the City. Encourage a broad range of housing values to ensure success.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City staff to develop improvements (such as streets, water, and sewer) needed to expand housing opportunities in Big Rapids and to include such improvements in the City's Capital Improvements Program. City staff will seek appropriate grants, loans, and other funding sources to develop and maintain necessary improvements.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) City staff will ensure that inadequate maintenance of housing does not detract from neighborhoods by enforcing regulations and provide residents with an easy and effective method for reporting violations such as parking issues, noise, over-occupied housing units, and maintenance issues.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) Through planning and zoning, the Planning Commission will promote small housing developments and encourage developers to include an acceptable level of amenities (such as basements and garages) while at the same time encouraging the development of smaller, more affordable and sustainable housing.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, Housing Commission, and City Staff will encourage sustainable homeownership by maintaining information describing public programs designed to assist potential and existing homeowners.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

Long-Term/Ongoing Actions (2016-2020)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Medium-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2016 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, City Staff, and the Housing Commission to expand housing opportunities for all types of households by defining areas appropriate for housing development in the Master Plan and making any necessary amendments to the Zoning Ordinance that encourage

quality development or redevelopment of housing. This would include housing to accommodate the needs of families, senior citizens, students, professional, and others to allow for a varied population in the City. Encourage a broad range of housing values to ensure success.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City staff to develop improvements (such as streets, water, and sewer) needed to expand housing opportunities in Big Rapids and to include such improvements in the City's Capital Improvements Program. City staff will seek appropriate grants, loans, and other funding sources to develop and maintain necessary improvements.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) City staff will ensure that inadequate maintenance of housing does not detract from neighborhoods by enforcing regulations and provide residents with an easy and effective method for reporting violations such as parking issues, noise, over-occupied housing units, and maintenance issues.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) Through planning and zoning, the Planning Commission will promote small housing developments and encourage developers to include an acceptable level of amenities (such as basements and garages) while at the same time encouraging the development of smaller, more affordable and sustainable housing.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, Housing Commission, and City Staff will encourage sustainable homeownership by maintaining information describing public programs designed to assist potential and existing homeowners.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

Transportation

Issue – Vehicular traffic and the condition of streets and roads are issues that detract from the overall quality of life in Big Rapids.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids is at the intersection of US-131 (West Michigan's north south interstate highway) and M-20 (an east-west state route). Additionally, the City and Mecosta County provide a complete network of streets and roads to serve the area's residents and businesses. While traffic is seen as an issue in Big Rapids, traffic is also a sign of life in the area related to the demand for the services provided by both the public and private sectors. Additionally, traffic is really a relative condition – what is seen as "traffic" in Big Rapids, where a cross-town commute takes less than ten minutes, is not the same as "traffic" in larger communities where that is the amount of time drivers can spend getting through a couple of traffic signals.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards improving the City's streets through the use of asset management (maintains an up-to-date inventory of the condition of state, county, and city maintained roads and streets, and lays out a maintenance program that provides for the right fix at the right time) and will strive to reduce the impacts of traffic through the use of access management (improving traffic flow by proper placement of access points) and improvements to the transportation network.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since it was identified during the public participation phase of the planning process as essential. Traffic flow and the condition of roads were mentioned by key person interviewees and participants at both workshops. Most people seem to concentrate on Perry, State and M-20 as the key congestion areas that need improvements. Many of the focus groups also cited traffic and the condition of roads. The community survey listed traffic and the condition of roads as the community feature in which residents are least satisfied.

Short-Term Actions (2010-2011)

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City's Public Works Department to implement a transportation asset management program that maintains an up-to-date inventory of the condition of state, county, and city maintained roads and streets, and lays out a maintenance program that provides for the right fix at the right time.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission will work with the City's Public Works Department, as well as the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Mecosta County Road Commission to coordinate transportation improvements with other improvements (public and private utilities, sidewalks, new developments, and other projects) to minimize repeating maintenance actions and closure of streets.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

3. The Planning Commission will work with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and Big Rapids Township to develop an Access Management Plan for the City's and Township's commercial corridors (especially State Street and Perry Avenue). The study will include working with the Michigan Department of Transportation to determine if the current lane configuration on State Street is optimal.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

4. The Planning Commission will work with City Staff, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to promote bicycling on trails and on bicycle lanes.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

5. The City's Dial-a-Ride Transit System (DART) will strive to provide an adequate level of public transit to meet the needs of the City's residents and businesses. The Planning Commission will consider existing routes and service areas when making decisions related to locating facilities.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

Medium-Term/Ongoing Actions (2012-2015)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Short-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2012 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission will work with City Staff, the City Commission, Big Rapids Township, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Transportation to determine the feasibility of an additional bridge across the Muskegon River on the City's south-side.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City's Public Works Department to implement a transportation asset management program that maintains an up-to-date inventory of the condition of state, county, and city maintained roads and streets, and lays out a maintenance program that provides for the right fix at the right time.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City's Public Works Department, as well as the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Mecosta County Road Commission to coordinate transportation improvements with other improvements (public and private utilities, sidewalks, new developments, and other projects) to minimize repeating maintenance actions and closure of streets.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and Big Rapids Township to implement an Access Management Program along the City's and Township's commercial corridors (especially State Street and Perry Avenue).

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with City Staff, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to promote bicycling on trails and on bicycle lanes.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

7. (Ongoing Action) The City's Dial-a-Ride Transit System (DART) will strive to provide an adequate level of public transit to meet the needs of the City's residents and businesses. The Planning Commission will consider existing routes and service areas when making decisions related to locating facilities.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

Long-Term/Ongoing Actions (2016-2020)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Medium-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2016 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission will work with City Staff to develop a Capital Improvements Schedule that will identify when to pave all remaining gravel roads within the City and provide sidewalks where beneficial.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City's Public Works Department to implement a transportation asset management program that maintains an up-to-date inventory of the condition of state, county, and city maintained roads and streets, and lays out a maintenance program that provides for the right fix at the right time.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

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2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

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2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with City Staff, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Mecosta County Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to promote bicycling on trails and on bicycle lanes.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

7. (Ongoing Action) The City's Dial-a-Ride Transit System (DART) will strive to provide an adequate level of public transit to meet the needs of the City's residents and businesses. The Planning Commission will consider existing routes and service areas when making decisions related to locating facilities.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

Downtown

Issue – Big Rapids' downtown, and areas immediately adjacent to the downtown, endure aging public facilities and amenities, many out-of-date private facilities, vacancies, a poor mixture of uses, and other concerns that detract from the overall usefulness of the downtown.

Assets – Big Rapids downtown has many great assets such as adequate parking, wide sidewalks, a fairly good mixture of shops and businesses, and its proximity to public agencies, residential areas, and Ferris State University.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will work towards improving the vitality of the downtown by maintaining and improving public facilities and encouraging merchants, property-owners, and residents to maintain and improve their facilities.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since the downtown is one of the most visible areas of the community and acts as the overall barometer for the health of the entire area. During the public participation phase of the planning process the downtown was frequently cited as a strength and as a weakness. Often the downtown was not specifically cited, but discussions centered on businesses or services that would typically locate in a downtown but that are lacking – such as entertainment and restaurants.

Short-Term Actions (2010-2011)

1. The Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will continue to work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to maintain and improve the City's Downtown area by participating in existing and future programs designed to improve the Downtown's physical and economic well-being.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission will work with property owners and City Staff to consider redeveloping areas adjacent to the downtown to encourage an improved transition between the downtown and surrounding land uses. The Planning Commission will appoint a working committee to address this issue and develop more detailed action plans for the Planning Commission to consider.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

3. The Planning Commission, the Downtown Development Authority, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to maintain an up-to-date list of issues and to identify the best way to address issues related to infrastructure, streetscape, and vacancies.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

4. The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to promote downtown activities such as the farmers market to attract shoppers.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

5. The Planning Commission, the City Commission, and City Staff will work to maintain public facilities (City, County, State, and Federal) in the downtown area to ensure that users of these services frequently visit the business area.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

Medium-Term/Ongoing Actions (2012-2015)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Short-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2012 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will continue to work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to maintain and improve the City's Downtown area by participating in existing and future programs designed to improve the Downtown's physical and economic well-being.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with property owners and City Staff to consider redeveloping areas adjacent to the downtown to encourage an improved transition between the downtown and surrounding land uses. The Planning Commission will appoint a working committee to address this issue and develop more detailed action plans for the Planning Commission to consider.

2012 Comments:
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2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the Downtown Development Authority, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to maintain an up-to-date list of issues and to identify the best way to address issues related to infrastructure, streetscape, and vacancies.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to promote downtown activities such as the farmers market to attract shoppers.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the City Commission, and City Staff will work to maintain public facilities (City, County, State, and Federal) in the downtown area to ensure that users of these services frequently visit the business area.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

Long-Term/Ongoing Actions (2016-2020)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Medium-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2016 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will continue to work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to maintain and improve the City's Downtown area by participating in existing and future programs designed to improve the Downtown's physical and economic well-being.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with property owners and City Staff to consider redeveloping areas adjacent to the downtown to encourage an improved transition between the downtown and surrounding land uses. The Planning Commission will appoint a working committee to address this issue and develop more detailed action plans for the Planning Commission to consider.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the Downtown Development Authority, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to maintain an up-to-date list of issues and to identify the best way to address issues related to infrastructure, streetscape, and vacancies.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and City Staff will work with downtown business owners to promote downtown activities such as the farmers market to attract shoppers.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the City Commission, and City Staff will work to maintain public facilities (City, County, State, and Federal) in the downtown area to ensure that users of these services frequently visit the business area.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

Cooperation and Coordination

Issue – Decreasing public resources are creating burdens on public bodies and limiting the ability for them to adequately provide services and facilities that residents, businesses, and others require.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids is the County Seat of Mecosta County, so many government services are centered in the City. The relationship between the County, City, and the surrounding townships is a relationship where the success of each is dependent on the success of each of the others so working to cooperate and coordinate efforts will lead to greater success and lower overall costs. There are already many examples of cooperation and coordination that occur between each of the units of government.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will strive to work closer with Ferris State University, Big Rapids Township, Green Township, Mecosta County, Big Rapids Public Schools, the State of Michigan, the Federal Government, and others to seek efficient and effective methods to provide public services and up-to-date facilities.

This goal is included in the Master Plan since the need for more cooperation and coordination arose in all of the types of public participation. The relationship between the City of Big Rapids and Big Rapids Township, while better than it has been in the past, has been strained for many years. The City of Big Rapids is a mostly developed community, with very little vacant land to grow, while Big Rapids Township surrounds the City and has a lot of space for growth of residential and commercial developments. While the Township has room to grow, it does not have the necessary infrastructure to support an abundance of growth – but the City does have the necessary infrastructure, facilities, and programs that businesses and residents demand. Additionally, Michigan's economic challenges make it even more important for communities to coordinate efforts since there are fewer funds available than in the past. This issue/goal can also apply to

public and private schools, Ferris State University, Mecosta County, and many other public and/or quasi-public organizations.

Short-Term Actions (2010-2011)

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, Department of Public Works, and City Staff to continue to provide water and sewer services to its residents and businesses, and will work with the surrounding townships of Big Rapids and Green to provide an appropriate level of water and sewer capacity to encourage growth in the area.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission will invite the planning bodies of the two townships and the Mecosta County Planning Commission to at least one meeting a year to share training related to community planning, discuss common planning and community development issues, and provide for opportunities to learn of current local activities. The Planning Commission will strive to share reports and plans. The Planning Commission will create an Education and Coordination Committee to develop a process for the Planning Commission to consider.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

3. The City Commission and Public Safety Department will work with Big Rapids and Green Townships, as well as others, to provide efficient and effective fire and police protection to the area.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

4. The City will work with the surrounding townships, Big Rapids Public Schools, Mecosta County, and the State of Michigan to provide an appropriate level of recreational activities for the area's residents by considering the development of a joint recreation plan.

2010 Comments:

2011 Comments:

Medium-Term Actions (2012-2015)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Short-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2012 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, Department of Public Works, and City Staff to continue to provide water and sewer services to its residents and businesses, and will work with the surrounding townships of Big Rapids and Green to provide an appropriate level of water and sewer capacity to encourage growth in the area.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will invite the planning bodies of the two townships and the Mecosta County Planning Commission to at least one meeting a year to share training related to community planning, discuss common planning and community development issues, and provide for opportunities to learn of current local activities. The Planning Commission will strive to share reports and plans.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The City Commission and Public Safety Department will work with Big Rapids and Green Townships, as well as others, to provide efficient and effective fire and police protection to the area.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The City will work with the surrounding townships, Big Rapids Public Schools, Mecosta County, and the State of Michigan to provide an appropriate level of recreational activities for the area's residents by considering the development of a joint recreation plan.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

2015 Comments:

Long-Term Actions (2016-2020)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Medium-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2016 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission, Department of Public Works, and City Staff to continue to provide water and sewer services to its residents and businesses, and will work with the surrounding townships of Big Rapids and Green to provide an appropriate level of water and sewer capacity to encourage growth in the area.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will invite the planning bodies of the two townships and the Mecosta County Planning Commission to at least one meeting a year to share training related to community planning, discuss common planning and community development issues, and provide for opportunities to learn of current local activities. The Planning Commission will strive to share reports and plans.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The City Commission and Public Safety Department will work with Big Rapids and Green Townships, as well as others, to provide efficient and effective fire and police protection to the area.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The City will work with the surrounding townships, Big Rapids Public Schools, Mecosta County, and the State of Michigan to provide an appropriate level of recreational activities for the area's residents by considering the development of a joint recreation plan.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

Public Facilities and Services

Issue – The continued success of the City of Big Rapids depends on maintaining an appropriate level of facilities and services necessary to meet the needs of residents, businesses, and public institutions.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids is a full service community that provides its residents with a high level of public services that include fire and police protection, maintenance of streets and sidewalks, public transit, parks and recreation, public water and sewer, and many other amenities and services that make living in the City enjoyable.

Goal – The City of Big Rapids will strive to maintain an appropriate level of public facilities and services by improving facilities, planning for the future needs of the community, seeking funding from a variety of sources, and involving the community in the decision-making and budget process.

This is included as a goal since it was identified numerous times during the public participation phase of the planning process. Aging infrastructure, such as wastewater treatment and the condition of the City's streets, is a concern that was identified and must be addressed to ensure the future success of the City.

Short-Term Actions (2010-2011)

1. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to maintain an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program to ensure that maintaining and upgrading necessary infrastructure is carefully planned and long-term funding is in-place for necessary improvements.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to survey its residents every three to five years to determine their satisfaction related to public facilities and services.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

3. The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will strive to seek outside (State, Federal, and Private) funding resources (grants and loans) to assist in funding public projects and programs.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

4. The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will ensure that all public facilities are planned, designed, and constructed to be sustainable.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

5. The City of Big Rapids will maintain an up-to-date recreation plan in order to assist in funding improvements to the City's parks using the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

6. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Big Rapids Public Schools, charter/private schools, and the Mecosta-Osceola County Intermediate School District to identify future facilities needs.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

Medium-Term Actions (2012-2015)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Short-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2012 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to maintain an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program to ensure that maintaining and upgrading necessary infrastructure is carefully planned and long-term funding is in-place for necessary improvements.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to survey its residents every three to five years to determine their satisfaction related to public facilities and services.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will strive to seek outside (State, Federal, and Private) funding resources (grants and loans) to assist in funding public projects and programs.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will ensure that all public facilities are planned, designed, and constructed to be sustainable.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The City of Big Rapids will maintain an up-to-date recreation plan in order to assist in funding improvements to the City's parks using the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

7. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Big Rapids Public Schools, charter/private schools, and the Mecosta-Osceola County Intermediate School District to identify future facilities needs.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:
2015 Comments:

Long-Term Actions (2016-2020)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Medium-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2016 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to maintain an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program to ensure that maintaining and upgrading necessary infrastructure is carefully planned and long-term funding is in-place for necessary improvements.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission will work with the City Commission and City Staff to survey its residents every three to five years to determine their satisfaction related to public facilities and services.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will strive to seek outside (State, Federal, and Private) funding resources (grants and loans) to assist in funding public projects and programs.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Staff will ensure that all public facilities are planned, designed, and constructed to be sustainable.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The City of Big Rapids will maintain an up-to-date recreation plan in order to assist in funding improvements to the City's parks using the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

7. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Big Rapids Public Schools, charter/private schools, and the Mecosta-Osceola County Intermediate School District to identify future facilities needs.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

Economic Development

Issue – While the Big Rapids Area has a more diverse range of employment opportunities than other areas in Michigan, it still suffers from lack of adequate employment opportunities necessary for growth in Big Rapids.

Assets – The City of Big Rapids does have a more diverse range of employment opportunities than Michigan as-a-whole, with a lower percentage of jobs related to automobile manufacturing. The location of Ferris State University is a huge asset related to employment that provides a range of employment from professors and administrators to staff filling the many demands of keeping a university moving forward. The fact that the City is the County Seat also provides government jobs, and Mecosta County Medical Center provides healthcare jobs. The City also has a healthy mix of manufacturing employment and additional space for new businesses to locate.

Goal – Promote an appropriate amount of land and resources to manufacturing, commercial, and other land use categories that provide opportunities for businesses to expand or locate in Big Rapids.

This goal is included since all of the different levels of public participation identified the lack of jobs, and low wages, as weaknesses or threats. Most of the other issues addressed in this plan require resources to accomplish, and the best way to garner resources is to encourage the development and retention of high wage jobs for the area's residents.

Short-Term Actions (2010-2011)

1. The Planning Commission, City Commission, the Public Works Department, and other City Staff will ensure the City has adequate infrastructure in-place to meet the needs of existing and new business by maintaining an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program that includes a schedule of necessary projects related to transportation, water, wastewater, and other public infrastructure needs.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

2. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Ferris State University and Mecosta County Development Corporation to promote jobs in Big Rapids related to programs offered at the University by determining the feasibility of creating a business incubator centered on skills provided at Ferris State University.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

3. The Planning Commission, City Staff, and Mecosta County Development Corporation will ensure the City's industrial park and industrial areas address the needs of existing and potential businesses. The City will also work with Big Rapids Township to promote business in the Airport Industrial Park.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

4. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation to help existing businesses expand and to help attract new businesses to the City.

2010 Comments:
2011 Comments:

5. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to promote the area to existing employers and potential employers.

2010 Comments:

2011 Comments:

6. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and others such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce, and Michigan State University Extension to diversify the area's economy by promoting the area for value-added agriculture, renewable energy, health sciences, tourism, education, and other employment opportunities.

2010 Comments:

2011 Comments:

7. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee to attract funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and other federal and state agencies.

2010 Comments:

2011 Comments:

8. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work closely with the Downtown Business Association (DBA), the Chamber of Commerce, and business groups to promote commercial and service growth in Big Rapids. The City will continue to support the DBA by maintaining a position on the DBA Board.

2010 Comments:

2011 Comments:

9. The Planning Commission and City Staff will work closely with the Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote Big Rapids as a destination for visitors. The City will work with the CVB to determine the potential for creating a city position (Parks and Recreation Director) on the CVB Board.

2010 Comments:

2011 Comments:

10. The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and the Downtown Development Authority will continue to improve the Downtown and promote it as a destination for visitors and a viable shopping option for residents by following the recommendations of the 2006 "Big Rapids Downtown Blueprint" and updating the document and process when actions are completed.

2010 Comments:

2011 Comments:

Medium-Term Actions (2012-2015)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Short-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2012 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, the Public Works Department, and other City Staff will ensure the City has adequate infrastructure in-place to meet the needs of existing and new business by maintaining an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program that includes a schedule of necessary projects related to transportation, water, wastewater, and other public infrastructure needs.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Ferris State University and Mecosta County Development Corporation to promote jobs in Big Rapids related to programs offered at the University by determining the feasibility of creating a business incubator centered on skills provided at Ferris State University.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Staff, and Mecosta County Development Corporation will ensure the City's industrial park and industrial areas address the needs of existing and potential businesses. The City will also work with Big Rapids Township to promote business in the Airport Industrial Park.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation to help existing businesses expand and to help attract new businesses to the City.

2012 Comments:

2013 Comments:

2014 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to promote the area to existing employers and potential employers.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:

7. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and others such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area Chamber of Commerce, and Michigan State University Extension to diversify the area's economy by promoting the area for value-added agriculture, renewable energy, health sciences, tourism, education, and other employment opportunities.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:

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2014 Comments:

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business groups to promote commercial and service growth in Big Rapids. The City will continue to support the DBA by maintaining a position on the DBA Board.

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2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:

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2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:

11. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and the Downtown Development Authority will continue to improve the Downtown and promote it as a destination for visitors and a viable shopping option for residents by following the recommendations of the 2006 "Big Rapids Downtown Blueprint" and updating the document and process when actions are completed.

2012 Comments:
2013 Comments:
2014 Comments:

Long-Term Actions (2016-2020)

1. The Planning Commission will evaluate the status of the Medium-Term Actions and make necessary adjustments.

2016 Comments:

2. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Commission, the Public Works Department, and other City Staff will ensure the City has adequate infrastructure in-place to meet the needs of existing and new business by maintaining an up-to-date Capital Improvements Program that includes a schedule of necessary projects related to transportation, water, wastewater, and other public infrastructure needs.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

3. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Ferris State University and Mecosta County Development Corporation to promote jobs in Big Rapids related to programs offered at the University by determining the feasibility of creating a business incubator centered on skills provided at Ferris State University.

2016 Comments:

2017 Comments:

2018 Comments:

2019 Comments:

4. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, City Staff, and Mecosta County Development Corporation will ensure the City's industrial park and industrial areas

address the needs of existing and potential businesses. The City will also work with Big Rapids Township to promote business in the Airport Industrial Park.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

5. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation to help existing businesses expand and to help attract new businesses to the City.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

6. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to promote the area to existing employers and potential employers.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

7. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with Mecosta County Development Corporation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and others such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Mecosta County Area

Chamber of Commerce, and Michigan State University Extension to diversify the area's economy by promoting the area for value-added agriculture, renewable energy, health sciences, tourism, education, and other employment opportunities.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

8. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee to attract funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and other federal and state agencies.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

9. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work closely with the Downtown Business Association (DBA), the Chamber of Commerce, and business groups to promote commercial and service growth in Big Rapids. The City will continue to support the DBA by maintaining a position on the DBA Board.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

10. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission and City Staff will work closely with the Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote Big Rapids as a destination for visitors. The City will work with the CVB to determine the potential for creating a city position (Parks and Recreation Director) on the CVB Board.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

11. (Ongoing Action) The Planning Commission, the Downtown Business Association, and the Downtown Development Authority will continue to improve the Downtown and promote it as a destination for visitors and a viable shopping option for residents by following the recommendations of the 2006 "Big Rapids Downtown Blueprint" and updating the document and process when actions are completed.

2016 Comments:
2017 Comments:
2018 Comments:
2019 Comments:

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

Influences

The development of the City of Big Rapids' Future Land Use Map was influenced by several factors. The following paragraphs describe several of these factors. They are not listed in any specific order of importance, but are listed to provide an understanding of the thoughts that go into developing a Future Land Use Plan.

The first consideration is the existing distribution of land uses in and around the City. It is obviously more difficult to recommend a change from one type of land use to another than it is to recommend developing a vacant area of land. Not only does changing the use of an area influence the area – but it influences adjacent areas that developed years, or decades, earlier. So, communities must carefully consider any recommendations to alter the existing character of an area through a land use change or by developing vacant land. Even if an area is in need of improvements, making changes to land uses can have unforeseen impacts on the entire community.

The second consideration is public input. By developing a preferred vision for a community, along with goals and actions to reach the goals, the community is expressing how the community will look in the future. If the community sees a growing population as essential, more space must be devoted to residential land uses, schools, and other amenities designed to serve a larger population. If a community wants to provide its residents with more jobs, land must be devoted to the development of private sector businesses (manufacturing, service, retail, office, and other private sector) or other employment-providing organizations (education or other public-sector jobs are examples). Examples of land use requirements to address community goals are as limitless as the number of communities and ideas. Also, it is important to recognize that one community goal often requires many land use recommendations. A goal of population growth, for example, requires not only additional room for homes to house the additional population, but changes that could attract people to the area (jobs, schools, public amenities, and other pieces that could attract people to a community).

A third consideration relates to adjacent communities. Care must be exercised to ensure that a proposed future land use does not adversely impact a neighboring community's character. Closely related to this, is the fact that many communities (especially cities) are "built-out" or have very little room to grow. When this is the case, communities must work together to not only make the best use of the available areas for development, but to determine neighboring communities' interest in developing.

There are many other facts that a community must consider when developing Future Land Use Plan, but these are the primary points that a community like Big Rapids must consider.

Methodology

The City of Big Rapids generated the Future Land Use Map and the acreage figures by modifying existing files that are maintained by the City. Categories appropriate for the Master Plan were developed for the Existing Land Use Inventory to insure continuity and allow for changes to be tracked. The Master Plan Working Committee reviewed changes suggested by City Staff for the Future Land Use Plan, and text was written to describe the changes. Table 19 identifies the 2009 land use distribution figures, the future land use distribution, and the acreage changes for each land use category. Additionally, there is a description of eight specific focus areas that may require changes to the Zoning Ordinance and additional input from the Planning Commission and property owners as the need for redevelopment of these areas increases.

Future Land Use Category Descriptions

Residential Categories

There are four designated categories of residential uses. The total amount of land proposed for residential purposes in the Master Plan is 948 acres, or 33.9 percent of the City's area. This represents an increase of 163 acres from the existing land use distribution for residential land uses.

Single Family Residential – This category includes unattached single-unit homes. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to traditional dwelling units such as garages and storage sheds. This category does not differentiate between ownership options (owner-occupied, renter-occupied, or condominium). Due to the developed nature of the City there is no differentiation between high density, medium density, and low density single family homes – since most single family homes in the City are developed on fairly compact lots. The City's Zoning Ordinance does differentiate between various types of single family residential uses.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the designation of many vacant areas in the northeast section of the City to single family residential. Additionally, several medium-sized vacant parcels on the City's west side are designated for single family residential, as well as the conversion of many single vacant parcels located throughout the City's residential areas to single family residential.

The total amount of land proposed for Single Family Residential purposes in the Master Plan is 768 acres, or 27.4 percent of the City's area. This change is an increase of 149 acres from the 2009 existing land use inventory (Table 19). Map 9 identifies the proposed distribution of single family residential.

Two-Four Unit Residential – This category includes attached housing with two, three, or four units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, storage sheds, and other related uses.

There are no designated changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan related to this category.

The total amount of land proposed for Multiple Family (2-4 family units) land uses in the Master Plan remains at 39 acres, or 1.4 percent of the City's area. Map 9 shows 2-4 unit residential units located throughout most portions of the City.

Apartment Complex – This category includes attached housing with five or more units that are located in large grouped units. The category also covers the surrounding land and any structures related to the dwelling units such as garages, carports, parking lots, maintenance facilities, storage sheds, administrative offices, club houses, recreation areas, and other related uses.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the addition of land designated for apartments on the east side of the Muskegon River, along the River.

The total amount of land proposed for Apartment Complexes is 85 acres, or 3.0 percent of the City's area. This represents an additional six acres of multi-family housing. Map 9 shows multiple family complexes located primarily on the east side of the Muskegon River and along Fuller Avenue on the City's south side.

Mobile Home Parks – This category includes areas where mobile homes or other types of homes manufactured off site are located. This category only occurs where larger clusters of such housing occur, such as mobile home parks.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include a few additional acres that are currently vacant added to the areas designated for mobile homes.

The total amount of land proposed for Mobile Homes in the Master Plan is 50 acres, or 1.8 percent of Big Rapids' area, which is an increase of two acres. Map 9 shows that such housing is located in two areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Public and Quasi-Public Categories

There are five designated categories of Public and Quasi-Public land uses. The total amount of land proposed for public purposes in the Master Plan is 975 acres, or 34.2 percent of the City's area.

Government – This category includes a wide variety of land uses including municipal offices, federal, state, and county office facilities, maintenance facilities, and other areas maintained by a government unit or department. The category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include changing an area on the east side of the Muskegon River from government to apartments and adding government to the area north of the Mecosta County Medical Center.

The total amount of land proposed for Government uses in the Master Plan is 49 acres, or 1.8 percent of the City's acreage, which is a decrease of six acres. Map 9 shows concentrations throughout the Downtown, on the east side of the Muskegon River, and on the City's west side.

Schools – The category includes public, private, and charter schools (K-12). The category includes all support buildings, school-related recreation areas, parking areas, and other related uses.

There are no changes identified between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan.

The total amount of land proposed for Schools in the Master Plan is 72 acres, or 2.6 percent of the City's land. Map 9 shows schools located throughout the City.

Churches – The category includes all types of religious facilities. The category includes all support buildings, parking areas, and other related uses.

There are no changes identified between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan.

The total amount of land proposed for Churches in the Master Plan is 60 acres, or 2.1 percent of the City's land. Map 9 shows Churches located throughout the portion of the City on the west side of the Muskegon River.

Ferris State University – The Future Land Use Plan show the University occupying 482 acres on the City's south side. This represents 17.2 percent of the City's area. There are a wide range of uses within the University's campus including classrooms, offices, dormitories, maintenance facilities, and other support facilities. There are no changes identified between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan.

City & State Park – This category refers to the City's outdoor recreation areas and the Fred Meijer White Pine Trail State Park that passes through the City's east side. This category includes all support buildings and structures as well as land and parking areas.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include additional land designated for parks on the City's east side.

The total amount of land proposed for Parks in the Master Plan is 295 acres, or 10.5 percent of Big Rapids' area. This is 32 additional acres of parks. Map 9 shows the City's parks are located along the Muskegon River and in several residential areas.

Business Categories

Industrial – This category includes sites where any type of manufacturing process occurs. Industries can include those that produce various emissions in the process (smoke, odor, noise, light, vibrations, etc.) or those that do not produce emissions detectable to surrounding areas – such as the assembly of parts shipped from other facilities.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the conversion of some vacant areas on the City's east side to industrial uses.

The total amount of land proposed for Industrial uses in the Master Plan is 202 acres, or 7.2 percent of the City, which is an additional 16 acres of industrial land. Map 9 shows industrial sites primarily on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Commercial – This category includes retail and wholesale businesses, business and professional services, personal services, and other businesses that provide goods or services to the general public. The category includes any buildings associated with the land use, as well as surrounding land, outdoor structures, parking areas, access areas, and other related areas.

Changes between the Existing Land Use Inventory and the Future Land Use Plan include the addition of several vacant areas on the City's west side to commercial, as well as the conversion of several other areas of vacant land to commercial.

The total amount of land proposed for Commercial uses in the Master Plan is 258 acres, or 9.2 percent of the City's area. This is an increase of 20 acres. Map 9 shows commercial focused on Perry Street, State Street, the City's Downtown, and in areas on the east side of the Muskegon River.

Focus Areas

The following seven focus areas require the input of the Planning Commission, property owners, residents, businesses and organizations, and neighboring land uses. This plan recommends that a committee is established for each focus area to address the need for any changes to zoning necessary and to determine the best approach for advancing each of the areas. The focus areas are identified on Map 9.

Focus Area One

This area, located in the northeast portion of the City, is currently vacant and zoned for residential uses. It is currently surrounded by a variety of other residential uses including a mobile home park to the west, single family residential to the south and north, and an apartment complex in the northwest corner. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for lower density residential uses.

Table 19: Future Land Use Distribution

Land Use Category	Existing		Future		Acreage Change from 2009
	Acreage	%	Acreage	%	
Residential					
Single Family Residential	619	22.1	768	27.4	+149
Two-Four Unit Residential	39	1.4	39	1.4	0
Apartment Complex	79	2.8	85	3.0	+6
Mobile Home Parks	48	1.7	50	1.8	+2
Total	785	28.0	948	33.9	+163
Public and Quasi-Public Categories					
Government	55	2.0	49	1.8	-6
Schools	71	2.5	71	2.5	0
Churches	60	2.1	60	2.1	0
Ferris State University	482	17.2	482	17.2	0
City & State Park	263	9.4	295	10.5	+32
Total	931	33.3	957	34.2	+26
Business Categories					
Industrial	186	6.6	202	7.2	+16
Commercial	238	8.5	258	9.2	+20
Total	424	15.1	454	16.2	+30
Vacant	219	7.8	0	0.0	-219
Other (Streets, Roads, Water)	441	15.8	441	15.8	0
Total	2,800	100.0	2,800	100.0	0

Source: City of Big Rapids; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Focus Area Two

This area, also located in the northeast portion of the City, is currently vacant and zoned for residential uses. It is currently surrounded by a variety of other residential uses including an apartment complex on the southern end, and single family housing to the north and south. The area to the west is currently vacant. The area to the east, located in Big Rapids Township, is also vacant, but planned for single family residential. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for lower density residential.

Focus Area Three

This area, located on the east side of the Muskegon River, is currently owned by the City and used for low impact uses such as composting. It is surrounded by the Muskegon River to the west and M-20/3rd Avenue to the east. Commercial and vacant areas are located across M-20/3rd Avenue. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for commercial uses such as restaurants and/or office space.

Focus Area Four

This area, located on the west side of the Muskegon River, is a mixed use area that includes single family residential, 2-4 unit residential, some commercial and government, and a park. The area is surrounded by the Muskegon River to the east, M-20/Maple Street to the south, the downtown to the west, and parkland to the north. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for preserving the historic flavor of the area.

Focus Area Five

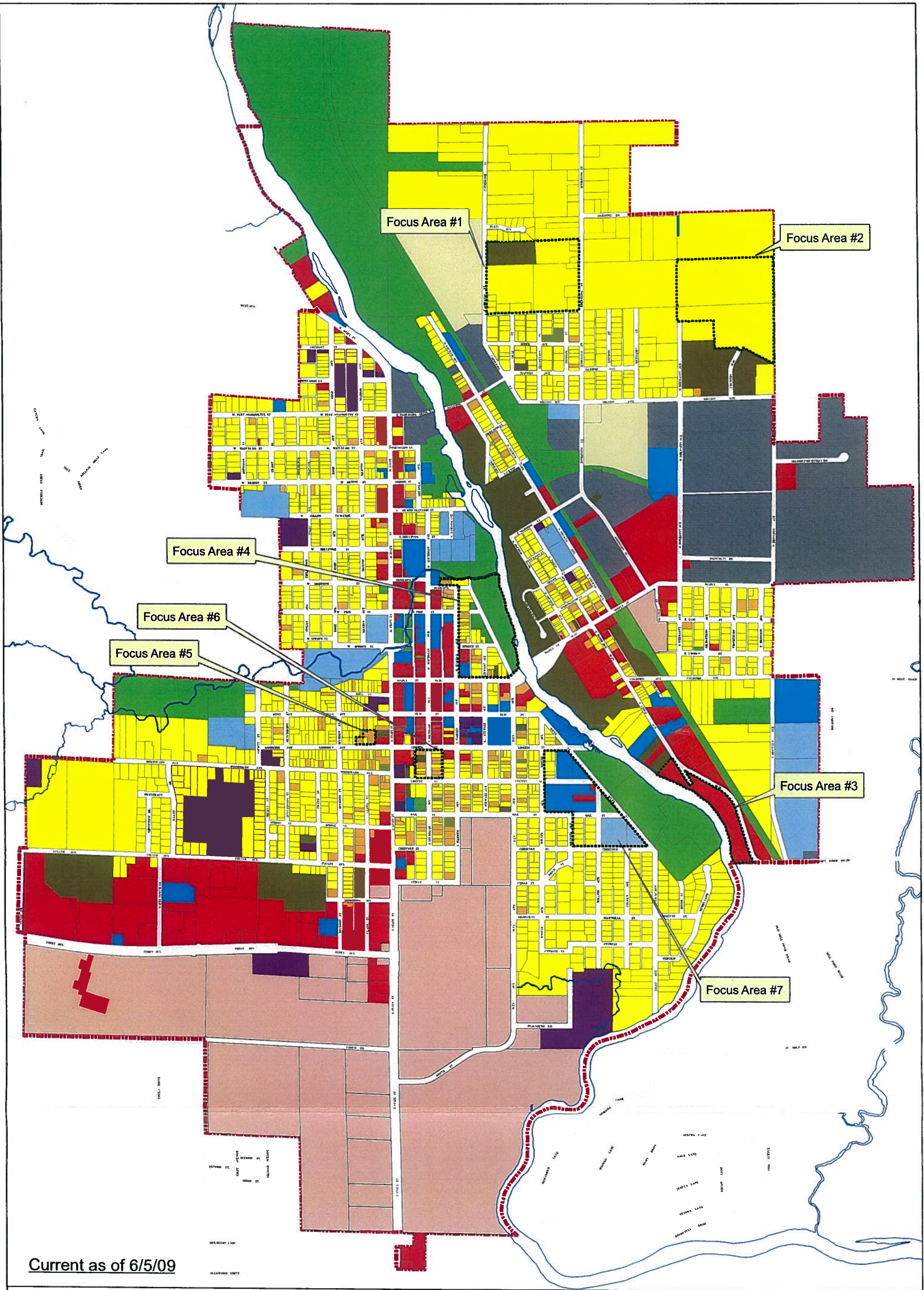
This small area, located on the City's west side, is a mixed use area that includes single family residential and 2-4 unit residential. It is surrounded by other residential uses and commercial land uses. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for lower density residential.

Focus Area Six

This small area, also located on the City's west side, is a mixed use area that includes single family residential, apartments, and 2-4 unit residential. It is surrounded by other residential uses and commercial land uses. This plan recommends changing the current zoning to allow for preserving the historic character of the area.

Focus Area Seven

This area, located in the heart of the City, is a mixed use area that Mecosta County Medical Center, an elementary school, some commercial uses, and single family housing. The area is surrounded by single family residential uses and parkland. This plan recommends developing an overlay zone that will allow the hospital to continue serving the residents of Big Rapids and Mecosta County in its current location.



Current as of 6/5/09

Legend

Apartment Complex	Park Land	River
Churches	Public/Private Schools	City Boundary
Commercial	Residential (single units)	
Ferris State University	Residential (2-4 units)	
Industrial	Future Rezoning	
Government		
Mobile Home Park		

0 725 1,450 2,175 2,900 Feet

City Of Big Rapids
Master Plan
Map 9
Future Landuse

CONCLUSIONS

There are several conclusions the City of Big Rapids can draw from undertaking this Master Planning Process. The first and most important conclusion is that Big Rapids is a great place with a wide variety of strengths. Closely related to this conclusion is that the residents of Big Rapids care very deeply for their community and want to see it thrive in the future. Residents know that the success of their community relies on a wide range of issues – some that the City is able to control, some that it can influence, and some that are clearly outside of the City's capacity to influence or control.

The City and its residents can control the way development occurs through planning and zoning. The City can influence the appearance of the City by making investments and establishing and enforcing ordinances. The City can plan for the maintenance and improvement of its necessary infrastructure and initiate creative ways to fund these operations. The City can provide staff that addresses the many needs of a community – from administrative staff to public safety officials and road maintenance crews.

When it comes to issues that the City cannot control, but can influence, more cooperation and coordination is necessary. The City can work with businesses to help ensure their success. The City of Big Rapids can work with Ferris State University to ensure the mutual success of both institutions. The City can work with the Big Rapids Public Schools, Mecosta County Medical Center, Mecosta County government, and the surrounding townships to work towards common goals. Additionally, while the City can direct its citizens to maintain their homes and property and to be good citizens – it is ultimately an individual choice that the City can only influence.

As for issues that influence the City but that the City has no control over – the City can strive to identify and develop ways to work around these issues. Michigan's economy is one example of an outside influence that the City cannot control – but by diversifying the City's employment base it can reduce the impacts of the State's economy. The cost of fuel is another example – but by providing affordable transit and maintaining a compact and walkable community the City provides opportunities for residents to be less reliant on their automobiles. The funding challenges facing Michigan's communities is another outside influence – but by carefully evaluating what is important and developing creative ways to fund the important actions the City can succeed.

A community that takes the time to honestly evaluate itself and that develops a preferred vision will be better able to tackle the many challenges that all communities face. Part of this commitment includes constantly evaluating the planning process and never feeling that the community has reached its peak.



RESOLUTION NO. 09-134

Commissioner Harper moved, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, the adoption of the following:

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2009 CITY OF BIG RAPIDS, MICHIGAN MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission and the City of Big Rapids Master Plan Working Committee initiated a process to update the City of Big Rapids Master Plan by notifying Mecosta County and the adjacent Townships of Big Rapids and Green on March 5, 2008, and

WHEREAS, public participation was sought and obtained by the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission and the City of Big Rapids Master Plan Working Committee to assist in identifying the preferred vision of the City of Big Rapids through the use of a random survey of residents, issue identification workshops, interviews of people identified by the City of Big Rapids Planning Commission, focus groups, and a public hearing, and

WHEREAS, information in the form of text, tables, and maps was prepared for inclusion in the 2009 City of Big Rapids, Michigan Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids has provided an appropriate review period required by Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008 to its residents, Mecosta County, and the adjacent Townships of Big Rapids and Green and held a public hearing regarding the adoption of the Master Plan on October 21, 2009.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Commission hereby formally adopts the **2009 City of Big Rapids, Michigan Master Plan**, its narrative, maps, tables, and other descriptive data as its guide for growth and improvement for the City of Big Rapids.

Yeas: Anderson, Harper, James, Rothstein, Warba

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the Resolution adopted.

Dated: November 16, 2009

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution is a true and complete copy of a resolution of the City of Big Rapids duly adopted at a regular meeting of the City Commission of said City held on November 16, 2009

I further certify that said resolution has been recorded in the Minute Book of the City of Big Rapids and that such recording has been authenticated by the signatures of the Mayor and City Clerk.



Roberta R. Cline, City Clerk

Dated: November 23, 2009

